

The Feminine Mystake

***Betty Friedan and the Dogma of
Domesticity in 1950s America***

by
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This thesis discusses the experience had by women who attended college in America in the 1950s alongside the history of the period that was presented by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Friedan's version of events has since become the dominant history of the period, but in this thesis I have attempted to redress this mistake. The thesis first discusses how *The Feminine Mystique* has been treated both by historians and popular culture since its publication, and how this has affected the way the period and the women who lived through it are perceived today. The first chapter focuses on Friedan's treatment of women's magazines from the period, and argues that both the magazines she discussed, and the others that were available, did not present as monotone a representation of the female college student as Friedan suggested in *The Feminine Mystique*. The final two chapters discuss the actual experience had by students in attendance at Smith College, Friedan's alma mater, at the end of the 1950s; the high academic standard that students were required to reach, the influence the Cold War had on women's education, the job opportunities which were available to female students and the paths they chose to follow after graduation.

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Introduction

How *The Feminine Mystique* has been
Treated by History

When Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 it was received with instant acclaim. Famed feminist and sociologist Jessie Bernard declared that the book provided a “much needed shock to those who have, unwittingly perhaps, encouraged women to surrender their claims to identity as human beings” and claimed that it “should be on the reading list of every course on marriage and/or the family. Every senior college woman should be required to read it”.¹ Twenty years after its publication *The Feminine Mystique* was still being praised; Activist and journalist Barbara Seaman, in recognition of the impact the book had had on the feminist movement, argued that *The Feminine Mystique* was the “most important book of the twentieth century” and stated that “Betty Friedan is to women what Martin Luther King was to blacks”.² More than forty years on its importance is still recognised; in Friedan’s obituary, *The Feminine Mystique* was described as “one of the most influential books of the twentieth century”, a title it well deserves.³

Upon its release the book served as a catalyst to the women’s movement, encouraging unhappy women across America and beyond to take control of their lives and return to work if they wanted to. It thrust the already burgeoning second wave into the media’s spotlight and made Friedan into a feminist heroine almost overnight. Yet as a result of the esteem in which the text is held, the image of women who lived through 1950s has been permanently altered. Although Friedan was criticised immediately after the book’s release for twisting her facts, presenting only one side of the argument and omitting any information which did not support her theory, the picture that she drew within the pages of *The Feminine Mystique* of women’s lives in the 1950s quickly came to dominate the historiography of the period. Due to the book’s instant success, popularity and acclaim and Friedan’s own remarkably persuasive style of writing, the image of

the American woman in the early years of the Cold War today is one of domesticity, compliance and a femininity preserved at all costs.

Friedan claimed that women in the 1950s were “suffer(ing) a nameless aching dissatisfaction”, trapped in the home and in the unfulfilling occupation of housewife, unable to use the college educations that they had worked so hard to earn.⁴ Friedan also used *The Feminine Mystique* to criticise current college girls, suggesting they had a laissez-faire attitude to their studies, thought of little other than boys, marriage and babies and, if they planned to work at all, it was “as a secretary while husband finished school”, but this was not the case in America during the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁵ This thesis argues that Friedan’s version of the lives of American women in the 1950s was significantly flawed, misleading and inaccurate. Not only did more women exchange the home for the workplace than ever before in this period, but many women even found themselves encouraged into traditionally masculine careers such as those available in the fields of science and technology.⁶ Due to the industrial demands of the Cold War, the pressure felt from the intellectual advances made by the Soviet Union and the shortage of male workers at this time the face of the American workforce changed significantly during the 1950s, but these influential forces were not discussed by Betty Friedan. These new found opportunities were especially enjoyed by college-educated women during this period as their education made them desirable employees. These women also had firsthand experience of the pressures a life spent in the home could cause, as many had grown up with mothers who suffered from the ‘problem with no name’ and therefore understood the positive impact a job outside the home could have on their lives. The majority of college graduates in the late 1950s and early 1960s had no intention of returning to the home upon graduation and instead entered high paying

and responsible careers, many of which offered them clear paths of progression; few became „just a housewife’ and of those that did, few remained so for long.

Criticising Friedan’s methodology and presentation of facts should not be taken as a wholesale discrediting of her message. Friedan’s research was both one-sided and incomplete, but also was never intended to be used as an historical documentation of women’s lives during the 1950s and early 1960s. *The Feminine Mystique* was journalistic and sensational and was intended to challenge readers’ outlook on their situation and shock them into action. The message of the book was so revolutionary that it soon attained an almost sacred status among feminists, women’s historians and those whose lives it helped to change. It is possible that this is why few have been willing to challenge the „facts’ presented within its pages - for fear that they should challenge the concept of the „feminine mystique’ itself or belittle the suffering of the women who benefitted from Friedan’s advice. As it has been perpetuated continuously by historians throughout the last four decades, Friedan’s version of the experiences women had in the 1950s has made its way into the popular consciousness, and is now so widely accepted to be the truth that it is rarely challenged or even researched, rendering critical analysis of *The Feminine Mystique* both complicated and problematical. The intention of this thesis is not to challenge the existence of the feminine mystique itself or the impact the book has had on numerous women’s lives, both when it was published and afterwards. Fear of denying or disproving the feminine mystique however has long staved off closer inspection of Friedan’s work, but her words have so heavily influenced how the history of this period has been remembered it is a necessary task.

The aim of this chapter is to review the criticism that has been voiced in the academic community since the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. This will be achieved

through a chronological approach to show how the types of criticism have changed and developed in the first forty years after the book was released. The second half of this chapter is an attempt to demonstrate the ways in which the historiography presented within *The Feminine Mystique* continues to be reproduced unchallenged by some historians despite the conclusive proof provided that Friedan's methodology was flawed and her facts were often incorrect. How this flawed historiography has permeated the popular consciousness and been reproduced outside of the academic realm will also be discussed. Finally in this chapter a structure for the thesis as a whole will be outlined, explaining what each subsequent chapter will focus on, why, and how the research has been carried out. An explanation of why certain aspects of women's history have not been addressed in this thesis will also be given, alongside plans for future development of this topic.

The Story So Far

Criticism of Friedan and her work began shortly after *The Feminine Mystique* was published 1963. Her book received mixed reviews, many declared that her work was a triumph, a revelation and "the wisest, sanest, most understanding and compassionate treatment of the American woman's greatest problem", but many reviews, which have since been overlooked claimed that Friedan's work was one-sided, overtly and unnecessarily angry, and in many places, redundant.⁷ One reviewer claimed that "the difference between Mrs. Friedan's book and the other estimable books written on this subject lies in the fact that Mrs. Friedan writes in anger, with deliberate attempt to arouse women into a state of rebellion and greater dissatisfaction by the constant use of 'loaded' words and expressions", another felt that, whilst he agreed that

American women lived in an “age of progressive de-humanisation”, American men suffered in the current culture as well.⁸ Even a reviewer for *The New York Times*, Lucy Freeman, claimed that the “sweeping generalities, in which this book necessarily abounds, may hold a certain amount of truth but often obscure the deeper issues”.⁹ Freeman also reprimanded Friedan for blaming women’s magazines for the growth of the ‘problem’, asking “What is to stop a woman who is interested in national and international affairs from reading magazines that deal with those subjects?” These are all valid criticisms of Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique*, but as both author and book grew in popularity, much of this objectivity disappeared and the theories laid out in *The Feminine Mystique* came to be accepted as fact.

As a result of the text’s success and the subsequent impact it had upon society, little critical review of the text appeared for over a decade after publication, until William H. Chafe published his study of 20th Century women’s history, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920 – 1970* (1972). His book included an examination of women’s situation during the 1950s, through which he claimed that Friedan over-exaggerated the extent to which the ‘feminine mystique’ served to damage all American women. Chafe explained that “Friedan... concentrated her attention of suburban college graduates who by definition had been exposed at least briefly to the possibility of a different way of life. Millions of lower-class women on the other hand lacked both the sophistication and experience to envisage the possibility of an alternative life-style”.¹⁰ He claimed that many of these forgotten women were happy, and neither sought nor wanted work outside of the home as they “accepted their ascribed status as both natural and right”.¹¹ Friedan’s work had been criticised widely for this failing ever since.

Despite Chafe's indictment of *The Feminine Mystique*, the 1970s saw little other critical review of Friedan's approach, research or the period she wrote about. Critics did appear but their scholarship demonstrated a tendency to reprimand Friedan for what she had not done in *The Feminine Mystique* – for example examine the suffering in women from other social or racial groups and provide solutions for them as well – rather than recognising the inaccuracies in the work she had completed. In *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Expert's Advice to Women* (1979), Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English criticised Friedan for not offering a solution to the readers who were not in a position to drop everything and take on a career. They also criticised her for suggesting that women should prepare themselves for fulfilling careers “with no evident concern about the availability of such jobs to all women, much less about the larger social purpose of the available occupations”. Yet despite this criticism, Ehrenreich and English continued to perpetuate Friedan's belief that her readers were trapped because of the images made popular by women's magazines, referring to the *Ladies' Home Journal* as the “propagandist of domestic felicity for three generations of women”, whereas a closer inspection of the magazine would have demonstrated otherwise.¹²

Friedan herself was not above criticism at this time. She was often publicly criticised for the way in which she referred to radical lesbians as the ‘lavender menace’ and excluded their rights from the National Organisation of Women's Bill of Rights. Susan Oliver argued in *Betty Friedan: the Personal is Political* (2008) that by the 1970s Friedan was viewed by “younger, more radical feminists... as a self-serving, an albatross, an elitist, a hypocrite, a liability and for some, irrelevant”.¹³ The claims she made in *The Feminine Mystique* however were not challenged or investigated for many years after its publication. It is impossible to know for certain the reasons why many historians chose not to read the text more closely in the years after

its publication, but I will suggest two possible explanations. The first is that Friedan was a talented and extremely persuasive journalist; her writing is self-assured and very convincing and therefore does not invite criticism or revision. Her work became so popular so quickly that the history presented inside it became the conventional wisdom and historians believed that further research was not necessary because „everyone knew it was true’. The second explanation is that as *The Feminine Mystique* as a text was central to the women’s movement that was occurring at this time, it is possible that many historians and feminists felt that to question the text which many regarded as having launched the women’s movement called into question the validity of the movement itself.¹⁴

The Feminine Mystique was and is a revered text among women all over the world because it altered the course of so many women’s lives both in the 1960s and afterwards.¹⁵ Friedan stated in the introduction to the 1998 edition of *It Changed My Life* that “It changed my life, it changed my whole life. Women still stop me on the street, in airports, after lectures and in restaurants to tell me that. They still remember just where they were when they first realised that they no longer had to accept that definition of woman that used to be the only one”.¹⁶ To claim that the words which saved so many women were wrong could have been seen by the movement’s opponents as proof that the suffering was not real, enabling them to deny that the „problem’ ever existed at all. Rather than jeopardising the advances which those involved with the women’s movement had worked so hard to gain, historians may have chosen instead to accept Friedan’s version of history and disseminate the myth she had created. This may also explain why, as the movement began to subside in the following decade, the amount of criticism of *The Feminine Mystique* increased.

The quantity of criticism which appeared grew substantially throughout the eighties and early nineties, although the same pattern of criticism continued. Despite further analysis of *The Feminine Mystique* appearing during this period, especially as women's history as a discipline grew in popularity, judgement of the text remained superficial in many ways. Rachel Bowlby's ground breaking essay "The Problem with no Name: Re-reading Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*" was one of the first to address fundamental weakness and inconsistencies with Friedan's thesis, rather than its scope or cultural and social assumptions. She criticised Friedan for not producing more racially balanced scholarship, for labelling sexual promiscuity and homosexuality as „problems' and for blaming the increase in both on the feminine mystique.¹⁷ This was a view which had of course become socially unacceptable in the twenty years since publication.

Bowlby led the charge of criticism during this period by claiming that Friedan was not successful in explaining *why* the „feminine mystique' had such a hold on women in the 1950s.¹⁸ Bowlby claimed that in attempting to explain why women returned to the home Friedan frequently contradicted herself, and suggested that Friedan did not fully understand the origins of the problem herself. Bowlby drew attention to Friedan's claim that women returned to the home in the 1950s because there were no longer any role models to show them a different path; women had no other choice but to become housewives. Bowlby showed that just a few pages further in the text Friedan claimed that women returned to the home because they were too afraid to choose a career - returning to the home was the „easier' choice. Here Friedan places the blame squarely on the shoulders of those women whom she is trying to save; they had a choice, but they made the wrong one.

Accompanying Bowlby's critique of the inconsistencies of Friedan's argument was a questioning of Friedan's decision to cast the 'feminine mystique' as a 'crisis'. She identified that, despite castigating American women's magazines in 'The Happy Housewife Heroine' for dreaming up new crises for women in order to keep selling magazines, Friedan herself then named the very next chapter 'The Crisis in Women's Identity'. Despite the fact that Bowlby herself made it clear that she was not trying to put Friedan on a par with the women's magazines, she succeeded in doing just that. Bowlby did not question the validity of Friedan's information, but her doubts about Friedan's interpretation of them, alongside concerns about her methodology, motives and ability as an intellectual historian marked the beginning of the removal of *The Feminine Mystique* from its pedestal.

Eugenia Kaledin, also writing during the 1980s, identified in *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s* (1984) that Friedan often contradicted herself, which caused her to unintentionally invalidate her own arguments. Kaledin cited as an example Friedan's declaration in *The Feminine Mystique* that "the one lesson a girl could hardly avoid learning... was not to get interested, seriously interested in anything besides getting married and having children", yet, Kaledin claimed, "Friedan's own book documented that these women gave a good bit of time to community interests - if not their own careers. Nor was their voluntary activity mindlessly for the middle-class".¹⁹ Kaledin recognised that in trying to prove her point, Betty Friedan often resorted to using any facts she could to back up her theory, regardless of whether they agreed with each other, but stopped short of assessing whether or not the details Friedan reproduced in *The Feminine Mystique* were factually accurate or not.

During the 1980s more criticism of Friedan herself appeared in scholarship than had in the previous decades. Two historians assessed Friedan's personal interest to the 'problem'; JP

Diggins in his 1989 work on mid-century America *The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace, 1941-60* (1988), and Glenna Matthews - who stated that she had also suffered from the „problem with no name’ in the 1950s - in her assessment of the housewife in American history *‘Just a Housewife’: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America: Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America, 1830-1963* (1987) Both claimed that the suffering Friedan had felt because of the „feminine mystique’ before she began researching her book left her unable to view it from an objective standpoint. As a result the judgement she made both of the mystique itself and the women she believed were suffering from it were heavily influenced by her own torment. Both historians questioned her assumption that women could *only* find fulfilment through worthwhile paid work and that the housewife’s role was merely a restraint to be thrown off. Matthews argued that Friedan was “too angry to be altogether fair” to the housewife and her duties and criticised Friedan for not discerning whether or not there were any of the housewife’s duties which would have been worth saving.²⁰ Matthews reprimanded Friedan for presenting too one-sided an approach to the problem, whereas Diggins criticised her for being too forceful in her approach, claiming that Friedan’s message had served to convince women to do nothing but pursue their professions, a criticism Friedan herself made of *The Feminine Mystique* in her book *The Second Stage*.²¹

Diggins also re-iterated a criticism of *The Feminine Mystique* first heard shortly after its publication in 1963 He claimed that “although Friedan’s book appeared in 1963, its context lay in the 1950s”.²² This was supported in the early 1990s by Susan J. Douglas in *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (1994), when she reprinted a quote made by one of Friedan’s keenest critics, Gloria Steinem. Steinem claimed that college women of her generation (she graduated in 1956, one year before Friedan began researching *The Feminine*

Mystique) “didn’t feel forced to choose between a career and marriage” and that “she expects to find her identity neither totally without men nor totally through them”.²³ Steinem voiced this opinion in 1962, one year before the publication of Friedan’s book, supporting the notion that by the time she published, Friedan’s work was already becoming out-dated, especially where her work on the younger generation was concerned. Douglas, possibly still fearful of undermining the importance of the ‘feminine mystique’, chose not to analyse this quote any further, but that she printed it at all was an important development in the re-assessment of Friedan and her theory.

In the same year as Douglas’s book was published, criticism of Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique* was challenged in a new and significant way. Joanne Meyerowitz re-examined the sources which Friedan built part of her thesis upon, and discovered that much of what Friedan had written as fact was in reality her *interpretation* of the information, and Friedan had not been objective in this exercise. Meyerowitz, studying the criticism that Friedan’s work was not inclusive enough, chose to re-evaluate the magazines Friedan researched. She chose to include a wider selection of titles that appealed to different social classes, not only the white middle-class. Meyerowitz not only discovered that the magazines aimed at different social classes offered a different image of home life and the value of homemaking to the reader, but also that the magazines aimed at middle-class women, the only women Friedan did assess, did not give as one-sided a view of women as Friedan had claimed in 1960.²⁴ Meyerowitz’s work incited a growth in the re-evaluation of both Friedan and her scholarship. She was closely followed by Eva Moskowitz, who also challenged Friedan’s one sided view of women’s magazines in the 1950s, and in 1998 by historian and Smith College professor Daniel Horowitz.²⁵ Horowitz also challenged the validity of the questionnaires and interviews conducted by Friedan and claimed that although the positive answers she received had far outweighed the

negative, Friedan only reproduced the negative responses in *The Feminine Mystique* in order to create a wide-spread „problem’.²⁶ He also challenged the myths which surrounded Friedan herself and asserted that she was never the trapped housewife she had claimed to be; according to Horowitz Friedan had in fact worked continuously, mostly in radical quarters, since leaving graduate school during the Second World War.²⁷ Without questioning the existence of the „feminine mystique’ or the important part Friedan’s book played in helping the sufferers overcome it, these historians were able to bring to light both the inaccuracies in the facts she presented and the holes in the research she claimed to have done. Their work exposed the truth about the many capable, talented and successful women who had lived during the 1950s and early 1960s whom *The Feminine Mystique* had kept hidden for many years.

Alan Wolfe followed the historians’ lead in 1999 when he published an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* which criticised the validity of Friedan’s theory and argued that much of the scientific and sociological evidence she based her work on had subsequently been discredited. Wolfe criticised Friedan, as he believed that, as a seasoned journalist and well-educated psychologist, she should have been more discerning when selecting her sources. He claimed that her “easy acceptance of Kinsey's biased sampling makes one wonder about her own sampling” adding that she used the Smith College reunion questionnaires, which she claimed proved that suburban women were suffering that “nameless, aching dissatisfaction” prior to her research for *The Feminine Mystique*, to “paint a far more positive picture of suburban life” for an article she wrote for a women’s magazine.²⁸ Wolfe claimed that Friedan was not trustworthy as a researcher, and therefore her study held no value to the serious scholar.

Recent criticism has progressed from Meyerowitz and Horowitz’s lead, calling into question both the building blocks of Friedan’s theory and the theory itself. Historian Nancy

Walker, like Horowitz and Wolfe before her, called into question the validity of Friedan's work, but went further than both by re-examining the exact facts presented by Friedan. Walker studied the July 1960 issue of *McCall's* that was discussed by Friedan in „The Happy Housewife Heroine'. Walker discovered that it was not, as Friedan claimed, “young and frivolous, almost childlike”, but claimed instead that “a close look at this issue of *McCall's*... suggests that the magazine was not sending a monolithic message to women, and that women did not read *McCall's* uncritically”.²⁹ It included erudite columns written by both former First Lady and international stateswoman Eleanor Roosevelt and acclaimed writer Clare Luce, columns which Friedan had mentioned only in passing “there were also... columns by Clare Luce and Eleanor Roosevelt”, rather than discussing the difference this made to the content of the magazine.³⁰ The issue even contained a letter to the editor in which the reader complained about critics like Friedan and declared that those who read women's magazines were not capable of making their own decisions or controlling the direction of their own lives. This was neither discussed nor even mentioned by Betty Friedan in her assessment of the issue.

Most of the research into *The Feminine Mystique* has focused on the relationship between women's magazines and the „problem with no name' and how the publication of the text affected the housewife's progression from the kitchen to the workplace. With the publication of *Higher Education for Women in Post-war America* (2006) historian Linda Eisenmann identified a different anomaly within the text. She questioned Friedan's portrait of college students and how the feminine mystique affected, or rather did not affect, them in the 1950s. Eisenmann showed that much of the evidence Friedan presented to support her theory that college aged women were under the spell of the feminine mystique could be challenged, either because Friedan based her theory on too small a pool of evidence or because the evidence she did reference was

misinterpreted or misrepresented. Eisenmann analysed Friedan's presentation of education, educators, and educational policy in the 1950s and successfully demonstrated that college was a far more welcoming and accommodating place for women than Friedan had suggested in *The Feminine Mystique*. She also explained that the onset of the Cold War, and the subsequent manpower shortage which occurred in America during the 1950s, played a vital role in opening up opportunities for women both in education and the workplace in areas which had traditionally been considered to be masculine. This was a development which was not properly discussed in *The Feminine Mystique*, despite the fact that these changes were already visible in the American workplace by the time Friedan was published. Eisenmann's re-assessment of education and the effect the Cold War had upon it in the 1950s was comprehensive, but more scholarship in this area needs to be undertaken before the education of women during this period, and the image Friedan created of it, can be completely understood.

The Misuse of the Mystique

Modern day critics of Betty Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique* question the use of the book as an historical text rather than as a journalistic one. Historian and critic Jessica Weiss argued that "as new research shows, despite its importance as an historical document, *The Feminine Mystique* serves poorly as an historical account of the 1950s".³¹ Despite the fact that much of the evidence presented within *The Feminine Mystique* has been discredited over the years, it continues to underpin much of the scholarship produced on women during this period. Many current historians writing about the 1950s and early '60s today still rely too heavily, and with too little critical engagement, on the historiography presented within *The Feminine*

Mystique to provide a picture of what life was like for women at this time. Historical accounts of the period continue to be published which perpetuate Friedan's inaccurate account of women's experiences during the 1950s. This in turn continues to sustain the popular, but incorrect, image of 1950s women.

More than thirty years after *The Feminine Mystique* was published, Pulitzer Prize winning author David Halberstam published *The Fifties* (1994) which, as the title suggests, is a history of the decade. Like *The Feminine Mystique*, it was received to wide-spread and instant acclaim. The book became a *New York Times* bestseller and won celebratory reviews from such respected papers as *The Christian Science Monitor* and *The Washington Post Book World*.³² In this book, Halberstam attempted to re-examine the accepted history of the 1950s; his work was described by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as "a useful antidote to the fifties nostalgia".³³ Halberstam was not successful however in his re-assessment of women's experiences during the 1950s, especially his examination of women's college experience. Halberstam suggested that in the 1950s "women were *now* raised in homes where their mothers had no careers" (emphasis added), and suggested that this caused them to lack ambition.³⁴ He stated that prior to the 1950s more women were raised in homes where their mothers worked, but during the '50s this number declined significantly, as Friedan had also inferred in *The Feminine Mystique*.³⁵

Halberstam did not provide any statistics to back up his claim, nor did he offer any indication of where his 'facts' originated. Statistical evidence on women's employment contradicts Halberstam's assumptions about female employment in this period. During the 1950s significantly more women were raised by mothers who held jobs than women in previous decades were: between 1940 and 1960, the number of mothers who worked grew by 400% from 1.5m to 6.6m.³⁶ This information can be found in *The American Woman* by William H. Chafe, a

popular, widely available and very well known study of twentieth century women's history published in 1972; this would have been available to Halberstam at the time he was researching his book. Betty Friedan's image of the 1950s home as a place which women were confined to was so widely accepted that even experienced historians fell prey to it, even when the facts are readily available to them.³⁷

Halberstam claimed that it was unlikely that women would even get the opportunity to matriculate in college as the education of male siblings was considered to be more important. He argued that "the boys in the family were to learn the skills critical to supporting a family, while daughters were educated to get married".³⁸ Once again, Halberstam agreed with the image of the 1950s woman put forth by Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* instead of with the facts about women's college enrolment during the decade. Even during the Second World War when, due to the lack of men, women had easier access to college than they had ever had before, the number of women who enrolled did not exceed the number of women who enrolled for college from 1952 onwards; from then on women's enrolment in college increased every year.³⁹ Women who lived during the 1950s were more likely to get the chance to attend college than women of any other decade previously, but Friedan's version of history is so entrenched that Halberstam was comfortable repeating it without attempting to verify the facts.

Halberstam also helped to perpetuate the myth which sprang up after the success of *The Feminine Mystique*. He claimed in *The Fifties* that "those women who were not happy and did not feel fulfilled were encouraged to think that the fault was theirs and that they were the exception to blissful normality. That being the case, women of the period rarely shared their doubts, even with each other".⁴⁰ Halberstam claimed that one of the first people to recognise that there was a problem was Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. In reality however,

Friedan's work was criticised even by contemporary reviewers for not "raising a single point upon which authoritative comment and conversational gossip has not already been exhausted".⁴¹ Many sociologists, educators and even other journalists had written quite extensively on the „problem with no name'. Morton M. Hunt's *Her Infinite Variety: The American Woman as Lover, Mate and Rival* (1962) discussed many of the same issues as Friedan did, including the destructive concept of being „just a housewife', the unnecessary emphasis placed on housework in modern society and how housewives could benefit from a career outside of the home if they found themselves struggling within it.⁴² It is true that Friedan's book reached many women who were not aware of the „feminine mystique' but Betty Friedan was not the first person to recognise the problem, or to discuss it in a public forum.

The version of history contained within *The Feminine Mystique* is so widely accepted to be true that even Halberstam's many erudite reviewers did not recognise that the history published was incorrect. *The Washington Post Book World* hailed his work as "fascinating... the Pulitzer Prize winning author and journalist leaves not a stone of the fifties unturned". This may have been a fair evaluation of the remainder of his work, but certainly was not an accurate appraisal of Halberstam's assessment of 1950s women. The chapter to which he confines women in *The Fifties* contained no primary research at all and only cites 3 separate sources, considerably less than his average per chapter throughout the rest of the book.⁴³ Halberstam, despite being a highly respected Pulitzer Prize winning author, had been so taken in by the myth created in *The Feminine Mystique* that he did not check the information contained within it and therefore not only produced a chapter that is of little worth to modern scholarship, but also succeeded in perpetuating the myth to a new generation of historians.

In the same year that David Halberstam published *The Fifties*, Joanne Meyerowitz edited *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Post-war America, 1945 – 1965*. Meyerowitz included in the book an article that she had written entitled “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: a Reassessment of Post-war Mass Culture, 1946 – 1958”. Two years later Eva Moskowitz published an article in *The Journal of Women’s History* entitled “It’s Good to Blow Your Top; Women’s Magazines and a Discourse of Discontent, 1945 – 1965”. Both articles challenged the accepted image of the 1950s woman and attempted to stem the flow of misguided scholarship on the 1950s that was based solely on Friedan’s image of the home, workplace and college. However, more than a decade after both articles were published, historian Lynn Peril published her own assessment of the ‘college girl’ throughout the ages, entitled *College Girls; Bluestockings, Sex Kittens and Co-eds, Then and Now* (2006). Similar to *The Fifties*, Peril’s work as a whole was both comprehensive and well-researched, but the image she presented of the college girl in the 1950s was once again that of an unfocused, unambitious and unhappy woman whose only option was to marry young and start a family whether she wanted to or not.⁴⁴ Peril repeated Friedan’s work without accompanying it with critical comment, which implies that she failed to research the text. Even when Peril did not quote Friedan directly, those familiar with the text of *The Feminine Mystique* can hear its influence upon her words. She stated in *College Girls* that “few commented on the lack of opportunity for women in the professions, inequities in compensation and promotion” – Friedan claimed that “for fifteen years there was no word of this yearning written in the millions of words written about women” – Peril condemned “the lack of affordable childcare” – Friedan deplored the need for more day care programs – Peril wrote about “the necessity of a husband who pitched in with the household chores” – a ‘modern’ husband was key in Friedan’s ‘New Life Plan for Women’.⁴⁵ Peril offered no evidence of

original scholarship to back up her claims, which suggests that the main source for her research into the lives of women in the 1950s was Friedan's journalistic text. In spite of the new scholarship available to her, Peril made the same mistakes as Halberstam had twelve years before.

Peril also not only accepted Friedan's indictment of women's magazines during this period, but extended it to include magazines aimed at teenage girls, a genre Friedan did not even study to any significant extent. Peril argued that "(l)ong before girls reached the campus, they encountered the mystique in magazines... aimed at teenage girls and adult women, in articles and stories that told readers to value social relationships over study, and to hide their intelligence lest boys find them competitive, bossy and unattractive".⁴⁶ This was not the case however, as this thesis will demonstrate. Throughout the issues of women's magazines published in the 1950s there are countless instances of articles and stories that were published with the express intention of persuading young girls not to marry young instead of attending college, and not to hide their intelligence but celebrate it and use it.⁴⁷

Peril is so invested in the image of 1950s magazines as presented by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* that it also affected her ability to fairly evaluate the advice given by an agony aunt, Miss Head, in teen magazine *Co-ed*. „Dinah' wrote in with a problem in December 1958; she stated that she was a conscientious student who considered studying important, but she had trouble keeping friends as they always became upset when she chose to study instead of socialising.⁴⁸ The agony aunt's advice was that "studying is a big job, and you want to be sure that it's a job well done, but if you do the job right, you won't let it become a full time occupation. Take out enough time to bone up on an extracurricular assignment – learning how to keep friends".⁴⁹ Peril analysed this advice, and came to the conclusion that "the teen magazines

urged readers to act like regular girls, not intellectual harpies” and that the magazines suggested that, for girls, keeping friends was important because “it implied popularity and the concomitant eager-to-please disposition that was associated with femininity”.⁵⁰ Friedan stated in *The Feminine Mystique* that magazines were creating images of women as “young and feminine...fluffy and frivolous”; that Peril’s interpretation of Miss Head’s advice was strongly influenced by this opinion can be seen in many ways.⁵¹ Firstly, that Miss Head’s advice was intended to convince Dinah to try to keep her friends because it would make her more feminine is not supported by the text. There is nothing in the wording of the agony aunt’s reply that would make it inappropriate to offer to a male student who was in the same situation; she does not suggest that being capable of keeping a few friends will somehow enable her to „catch a husband’, or even make her more attractive to the opposite sex. Secondly, Head does not infer in any way that she sees Dinah as an „intellectual harpy’ or indeed as anything other than a „regular girl’ simply because she enjoys studying. Most importantly, she does not diminish the importance of Dinah’s studying, or suggest that schoolwork is in any way less important to Dinah’s life than having friends; quite the opposite is true in fact, as Miss Head reminds Dinah that it is both important and time consuming *and* that she should make sure it is a job well done. She does not chide Dinah for putting her studying first or suggest that she should change her priorities. Peril however failed to recognise this, as the agony aunt’s opinions did not support Friedan’s theories about America in the 1950s. Peril suggested in her analysis that the advice that Miss Head offered Dinah was intended to encourage her readers to act a certain way, and she saw it as a product of its time, but the advice Miss Head offers – not to get so caught up in schoolwork that you forget to live your life – could easily be transferred to any male or female student today. Peril altered the facts to suit her image of the period rather than twisting her image

to suit the facts. Despite the fact that both Meyerowitz and Moskowitz's articles were published many years before *College Girls*, the accepted wisdom concerning the experience of college women in the 1950s is so widely recognised to be the truth that present day historians, such as Lynn Peril and David Halberstam, are still only repeating the mistakes made by Friedan in 1963.

***The Feminine Mystique* in Popular Culture**

Academic scholarship however is not the only problem. 1950s America has been brought to life in recent years on both the big and small screens, and the influence that *The Feminine Mystique* has had on the scholarship concerning this period is clearly visible in these productions. Mike Newell's 2003 film *Mona Lisa Smile*, starring Julia Roberts and a veritable „who's who' of young Hollywood starlets, focused on the experiences of four Wellesley College seniors from the Class of 1954 and the unorthodox approach taken by their History of Art tutor, Katharine Watson.⁵² Ms Watson arrives at Wellesley College in the autumn of 1953 from the less prestigious Oakland State with the hope of encountering the best and brightest female college students in the nation. That the girls are the brightest is confirmed in Ms Watson's first class, as she is unable to teach them anything about art that they do not already know, but her hopes that they are working towards a bright future are soon dashed as she realises that most of her students are "just biding their time until someone proposes".⁵³ Although the four protagonists, Joan, Betty, Giselle and Connie, do not fit well into the „feminine mystique' ideal at all points throughout the movie, they are clearly presented to be the exception, not the rule.

The film is a better representation of the version of women's colleges in the 1950s that is found in *The Feminine Mystique* than of women's actual experiences in college in the USA in the 1950s. This is most clear in the film's climax. Betty becomes upset when Miss Watson

refuses to turn a blind eye to the fact that she has missed several classes as (in the film at least) married Wellesley students were not expected to attend every class. When Betty is told that if she does not attend, Miss Watson will fail her, she writes a scathing attack on the teacher in the school newspaper, suggesting that Miss Watson is preventing the students from “fulfilling the roles that they were born to play”, i.e. that of wife and mother. Miss Watson reacts to Betty’s editorial by basing her next class around the „art’ presented in current popular magazines - adverts. An increasingly angry Miss Watson attempts to get her class of brainwashed would-be Donna Reeds to realise that they are capable of being more than the magazines suggest they should be,

“What will the future scholars see when they study us? Slide! [An advert for Old Dutch Cleaner featuring a young, pretty girl, asking „would you get a job as a housewife?"] A portrait of a woman today, hmmm? There you are ladies, the perfect likeness of a Wellesley graduate, Magna Cum Laude, doing exactly what she was trained to do. Slide! [an advert featuring a man running a tape measure up a slightly older woman’s leg; the caption reads „how to measure your wife for an ironing board’] A Rhodes Scholar... I wonder if she reads Chaucer while she presses her husband’s shirts? Slide! Now you physics majors can calculate the mass and volume of every meatloaf you make. Slide! „A girdle to set you free!’ What does that even mean?! I didn’t realise that by demanding excellence, I was challenging... the roles that you were born to fill!”⁵⁴

Just as Friedan did, Miss Watson places the blame for the girls’ behaviour squarely on the shoulders of the popular women’s magazines. She also makes the same mistakes as Friedan did, as the magazines aimed at college students were more likely to run adverts for typewriters and sweaters than cleaning products and meatloaf, and the advert for the ironing board is clearly aimed at men. She assumes that the students have been strongly influenced by adverts that they

have probably never seen, and if they had, would have had no good reason to pay any attention to as campus life at wealthy Wellesley College neither required them to cook nor clean.

When being interviewed about his creation, Newell stated that “the jobs that women could do [in 1954] were very proscribed; you could be a teacher, you could be a secretary or you could be a nurse and that was about it. There was no sense that your education was valuable in its own right, nor a sense that you were going anywhere with it, so the story in that sense, is absolutely real”.⁵⁵ Newell claimed that most girls would not be given the option to consider using their education at all after college as they would be expected to get married, and those who could not find a husband did not have many options open to them other than those listed above. This opinion also finds its voice in the film; during a Home Economics lesson, the students are asked what they would do if, while they were busy preparing to host their husband’s boss for dinner, their husband called and announced that six people would be coming instead of just two. When Giselle, the protagonist who least conforms to the ideal behaviour for girls (her behaviour is justified by informing the viewer that she comes from a broken home, “the first on [her] block”) suggests that the hypothetical wife should file for divorce. The teacher calmly replies to Giselle, “a few years from now your sole responsibility will be taking care of your husband and children”, and that although right now, she may only be attending the class to receive an „easy A’, “the grade that matters most is the one he gives you”.⁵⁶ Giselle’s teacher is suggesting that shortly after graduation, her only role will be that of housewife.⁵⁷ Although Home Economics classes did exist in the 1950s and were popular, this did not mean that marriage was the only option for female graduates. Women during this era had more choices open to them than they had ever had before, and made good use of them. Newell has been influenced by Friedan’s misguided claim that college educators supported the cultural trend of

early marriage, which was not the case during this period, especially at large, prestigious Eastern colleges such as Wellesley College where academia was valued and career training encouraged. As Newell's partial version of history was of course also the one promoted in the film, this image of the 1950s college as a training ground for housewives was popularised further by the release of *Mona Lisa Smile*.

Not only did Newell suggest in his movie that the college professors (with the exception of the „subversive’ Miss Watson) were only preparing the girls for marriage, but that the students thought of little else too. This approach closely mirrored the version of women's experiences as set out in *The Feminine Mystique*. When Miss Watson discovered that the cleverest of the four main protagonists, Joan, was „pre-law’, she asked which law school she was planning to attend after graduation. Joan replied that she hadn't really thought about it as “after college, I plan on getting married”. “And then?” asked Ms Watson. “And then, I'll be married”.⁵⁸ She is an emblem of the „mystique’, unable to imagine her life after her wedding day. Newell presented an image of the 1950s college girl not only as someone who had no desire to pursue a career, but as someone who had never even considered it. Newell's representation of the 1950s college student betrays none of the conflict which even Friedan described in *The Feminine Mystique*. None of the engaged interviewees whose statements were published in *The Feminine Mystique* were said to have considered their future past their wedding day, but in the originals – the full text of which was not published in *The Feminine Mystique* - many had expressed regret at losing what they had chosen to give up.⁵⁹ Newell was so caught up in the myth that all women in the USA in the 1950s were defined by the strictures of the „feminine mystique’ that he does not even allow his character to doubt herself. Once again, Newell's film is closer to Friedan's „50s than the truth.

His information is flawed, and the incorrect image of the „average‘ 1950s „college girl‘ is imprinted further in the collective consciousness.

Newell stated in an interview about *Mona Lisa Smile* that he was proud of how hard his team of researchers worked to ensure that his film was as historically correct as possible.⁶⁰ The information that Newell amassed concerning both what attending college was like for women and what expectations they had of post-college life however was deeply flawed as the sources from which it had been gathered were, themselves, incorrect. Neither *The Feminine Mystique* nor the subsequent scholarship which has relied upon it has presented an accurate version of what life was like for college women in the 1950s, therefore recent depictions of 1950s college students in ‘pop’ culture, such as the characters in Mike Newell’s *Mona Lisa Smile*, are also incorrect. As movies reach a far greater proportion of the population than any history book could, the film enabled Friedan’s myth to reach a wider audience. Newell is not a historian and therefore could not be expected to fact check the historiography presented in *The Feminine Mystique*, but until more historians commit to doing so, incorrect versions of the 1950s will continue to filter down into the popular consciousness and thereby further cement the myth in the minds of future scholars. This inadvertently allows Friedan’s misguided representation to continue to be the dominant representation of women’s college experiences in 1950s America.

My Contribution

Although much of the information presented in *The Feminine Mystique* is incorrect, Friedan’s research was intentionally flawed as she was attempting to incite change; her goal was to encourage those women who did feel trapped to fight against it, and to do this she made the

problem sound far worse, and more far reaching than it really was. She ignored information which did not support her theory and embellished that which did. One of the most effective methods she used to motivate her readers was to suggest that the „problem’ was so bad that it was now affecting the younger generation, and she did this by suggesting that a detrimental article or story which had been published ten years previously in a magazine aimed at middle aged women was somehow adversely affecting the youth of today. Friedan’s methods were effective as the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* helped to launch the women’s movement of the 1960s. Her book, however, was never intended to be used as an historical reference book, but unfortunately for the academic world, this has become the case. Friedan’s version of history is the most dominant version available; it is the conventional wisdom that this was what life was like for all women who lived in the 1950s, and a full re-assessment of the era is now due.

The aim of this thesis is to present an alternative, and more accurate, account of the experiences of the women who attended college in the 1950s than that which was presented by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*. Much of the strength and determination of the women who attended college in the 1950s has been obscured by Friedan’s work, but I hope that I can rectify this, as well as expose some of Friedan’s shortcomings. It is not my intention to suggest that the ‚problem with no name’ did not exist, or that countless numbers of women did not suffer greatly from it, but instead simply to illustrate that the ‚problem’ did not affect all women indiscriminately, and therefore did not exist in the monotone way Friedan claimed it had in *The Feminine Mystique*.

I have used a variety of resources in writing this thesis, including women’s magazines which were published during the late 1950s, papers from the Friedan Collection, kindly made available to me by the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for

Advanced Study in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Smith College archives in the Sophia Smith collection in Northampton, Massachusetts. I chose to study the *Ladies' Home Journal* as it was used as evidence by Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* to support her theory. It was the most popular women's magazine for women available during the 1950s and therefore the opinions and instructions housed within it would have reached a larger proportion of the demographic which Friedan and I studied than any other magazine available.⁶¹ In addition to this publication I have also chosen to study *Mademoiselle* as it was the most popular magazine specifically published for college women during the 1950s, and *Seventeen* as it was popular among at high school aged girls at this time.⁶²

To conduct an in-depth study of the entire decade would be almost impossible to achieve in a masters level project, therefore I made the decision to focus only on the years when Friedan herself was researching *The Feminine Mystique*. This choice also enabled me to restrict the information I used when formulating my own theories to only information which would also have been available to Betty Friedan; this practice also made it less complicated to show how selective Friedan was she created her own theory about women's experiences during the 1950s and early 1960s. When researching women's magazines, I restricted my search only to magazines published between 1956 and 1958. Friedan claimed it was her study of magazines which first led her to form her theory therefore I attempted to read only magazines published at the time when she was beginning her research, before she broadened her investigation into wider fields such as psychology and educational theory.

In order to create an image of what life was actually like for female college students in the 1950s I chose to study the information available in the Sophia Smith collection, an archive of Smith College's history housed in the Neilson Library at Smith College. Once again I felt that to

study *all* colleges, or even a small selection of women's and co-ed institutions would have required a much larger project, and far longer than one year to research. I chose to focus my research primarily on Smith College because Betty Friedan based much of her own research on the interviews she conducted with senior students from Smith College. She also conducted interviews with students from other colleges, but these interviews were neither conducted on the same scale, nor were they reproduced as frequently to support her theories as the interviews with Smith students. I included information about the other Seven Sisters colleges (Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Vassar and Wellesley) as, because they worked so closely together in the 1950s, I found that it was often hard to separate them from each other. I have chosen to use the moniker of 'college woman' throughout this thesis, rather than the more popularly used 'college girl' because all of the students I discussed were over eighteen. As this makes them adults, it is my opinion that the use of 'woman' is more appropriate than 'girl', and I hope it goes some way to altering the image of the female college student in the 1950s from that of a weak and uninspiring girl to the more accurate picture of a dedicated and studious woman.

The final major source I called upon was Friedan's own papers and research notes, held at the Schlesinger Library. The Friedan Collection is an extensive resource that has brought together a comprehensive collection of Friedan's research, letters, notes and drafts of all of her work, and proved to be invaluable to me. Through it I was able to gain access to the original interviews conducted with students from both Smith and other colleges, the research notes for the early stages of *The Feminine Mystique* and even contemporary newspaper cuttings kept by Friedan which included other interpretations of the 'problem with no name' published prior to *The Feminine Mystique* and less than favourable reviews published of her work shortly after its release in 1963. This resource enabled me to determine how much of her own research Friedan

had chosen to disregard when it did not suit her theory - for example the number of positive interviews with Smith students that she did not include in *The Feminine Mystique* in contrast to the, much smaller, number of negative interviews that we can see in print today. It also allowed me to see just how aware Friedan actually was of the other discussions which focused on the „problem’ while she was researching – despite the fact that she claimed in *The Feminine Mystique* that “for over fifteen years there was no word of the yearning in the millions of words written about women”.⁶³

Chapter one of this thesis will examine the relationship that Betty Friedan claimed existed between women’s magazines published in the 1950s and the rise of the feminine mystique, which she suggested occurred at the same time. Friedan claimed that the „problem with no name’ was able to influence so many women, and subsequently continued to control their lives because they were continually indoctrinated by the magazines they read on a monthly basis. Friedan’s theory contained many flaws however. She cited the magazines she studied very selectively, choosing only to reproduce in print the features and fiction which supported her theory whilst ignoring those that did not. Friedan also generalised her theory to all women, college students included, despite the fact that she did not include in her study any of the women’s magazines available during this period which were specifically aimed at college women. The first chapter first will look at why the information presented in Friedan’s chapter „The Happy Housewife Heroine’ is unreliable as historical fact, and then continue to examine the material that was aimed at college aged women and attempt to build a more rounded picture of the message women’s magazines were sending to young women during the 1950s. The chapter will include a study of some of the regular features published in the magazines, the fiction

written for the readers and the general interest articles that were included every month, but not the advertisements printed alongside these features. I have made the decision not to undertake a study of adverts as a part of my thesis as advertising is a complex topic that requires a better understanding of the theories of marketing than I currently possess. It is also such a wide and varied topic that it could form the basis of an entire thesis on its own.

The second chapter of this thesis will examine the experiences of the women who went to college in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The chapter investigates both the academic aspects of college life and the amount of engagement the students had with the outside world; included in this definition is both politics and current affairs, and boys and dating. It also investigates how much autonomy the students at Smith College were allowed, and whether or not they took advantage of this privilege. This information is juxtaposed with the information about the same students presented by Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*. Finally the chapter discusses the relationship between the advances made in the Soviet Union during the late 1950s and the subsequent drive to engage women in scientific degrees, and the opportunities this opened up for scientifically minded women. The aim of the chapter was to attempt to assess to what extent Friedan's monolithic image of the college student as a vacuous, marriage-obsessed clone is correct, if at all, and to try to create an alternative and more accurate image of an interesting and diverse generation.

Finally, chapter three investigates what college students in the late 1950s and early 1960s intended to do with their degrees after graduation, whether or not they planned to pursue a career and the job prospects that were available during this period to those who did. The chapter discusses the extent to which students were encouraged by those around them and how the level of support they received differs greatly to that suggested by Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*.

How the manpower shortage affected American business's willingness to employ women is discussed in this chapter, as is the difference this need made to the experiences women had once hired. An analysis of how attitudes towards working women changed dramatically throughout the 1950s, despite the fact that Friedan claimed to the contrary in *The Feminine Mystique* is also included in this chapter. This chapter will also present an investigation into the career paths taken by Smith College's class of '58 – the class interviewed by Friedan during her research – and discuss both why the majority of these women *did* intend to return to the home after the birth of their first child and why this was not a result of the 'feminine mystique' as Friedan had argued in 1963.

There are several important elements of the history of college women in the 1950s that I have chosen not to discuss in any form in this thesis, and I have made these decisions based on a number of reasons. As I only had a finite amount of time to research this topic, and of course a limit on the length of the thesis, it would have been impossible for me to study all aspects of college women's history deeply enough to make a worthwhile contribution to scholarship. I therefore decided to focus my attention only on women who had been discussed by Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*. This enabled me to juxtapose her version of history with my own and therefore demonstrate her flaws more effectively. Friedan has been criticised frequently since the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* for generalising her theory to all women. She only conducted a study of white, middle-class women, the majority of whom lived on the east coast of America, yet the experiences of female African-American college graduates differed greatly in many ways from that of the white college graduate. In the African-American community in the 1950s it was both more common for women to attend college in the 1950s than men, and if a student did *not* enter the workplace after graduation it was considered a waste.⁶⁴ The history of

the African-American woman's college experience is both too fascinating, and too immense for me to include in my thesis. For this reason I have also refrained from discussing the experiences of African-American students who attended Smith College in the 1950s as this topic could constitute a thesis in itself. I have also refrained from attempting to discuss how the college experience was different for women from different social classes in the 1950s. I have made this decision primarily because, as Smith College is a private institution, the majority of women who attended were wealthy. My intention in this thesis is to discuss the experiences had by the average Smith student in the 1950s, not the exceptions.

I firmly believe that the experiences had by women of other races – not just African-American - and social classes needs to be discussed historians as there is currently almost no scholarship available on this rich and interesting topic. Until the history of these women is discovered, the roots of both the civil rights movement and the women's movement cannot be fully understood, and it is therefore my intention to study more closely the experiences had by the women I was unable to discuss here in my PhD thesis.

Chapter One

Betty Friedan and the Vilification
of Women's Magazines in the 1950s

Betty Friedan's aim when researching *The Feminine Mystique* was to discover why so many college-educated women of her generation had upon graduation decided to pursue careers as full-time housewives and mothers, and why current female college students appeared to be more concerned with gaining their „Mrs' than their „B.A.'. In *The Feminine Mystique* Friedan claimed that all female college students wanted was “to get married, have four children and live in a nice house in a nice suburb”.⁶⁵ She argued that they were too busy planning for their lives after college as wives to the men they intended to meet whilst there to take their classes seriously; if any of them planned to work at all, it was “as a secretary while husband finished school”.⁶⁶ Friedan suggested that these problems - the housewives' boredom and unfulfilled dreams and the younger generation's lack of ambition - were largely caused by magazines such as *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *McCall's*. She analysed four women's service magazines, all of which were published between 1949 and 1959, and endeavoured to prove that they were putting pressure on women of all ages. She claimed they encouraged women to return to or remain in the home and accept their position as wife and mother, and they did this by presenting the career woman as „abnormal' and „unfeminine'; Friedan claimed that in just ten years “the image of the American woman seemed to have suffered a schizophrenic split” causing the “savage obliteration of career from women's dreams”.⁶⁷ Friedan also claimed that the fiction and advice that were published within the magazines only represented women who complied with the feminine mystique and were fulfilled by their household chores; women who pursued careers outside of the home were shown to be destructive, unhappy and a threat to the stability of the happy homemaker's marriage. The role model offered to readers, Friedan claimed, was a “woman who has no independent self to hide, even in guilt; she exists for and through her

husband and children”, and this contributed to the wide-spread retreat of college educated women back to the home.⁶⁸

Betty Friedan was a journalist, not an historian, and her intention when writing *The Feminine Mystique* was not to pen a comprehensive history of post-war families but to draw attention to what she saw as an unidentified malady affecting housewives across America, the „problem with no name’, and to encourage women to trade in their role as housewife for a more satisfying career. To achieve this end Friedan only included in her final version of *The Feminine Mystique* information which supported her theory that women’s magazines were perpetuating the problem and thereby galvanised the affected women into action by creating a villain for them to fight against. Her plan was successful and there is no doubt that she helped many women, but the analysis she offered of women’s magazines of the 1950s and early 1960s was highly exaggerated.

This chapter draws attention to some of the larger mistakes made by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, and exposes some of the imperfections in her research and the flaws in her methods. The size of the samples Friedan chose to study were too small and uniform to warrant her subsequent generalisation of her theory to society as a whole. In addition to this, only a small amount of the information she gathered from the sources she did study made it to publication, as she chose not to include information that did not support her claims.⁶⁹ Friedan studied only magazines aimed at white middle-class housewives, popularly known as „service’ magazines, and this oversight occurred in spite of the fact that, as a journalist, Friedan would almost certainly have been aware that the selection of magazines available to women during the 1950s was as diverse as the women who read them. Friedan failed to acknowledge a difference between the women who read the magazines she discussed (which

were aimed at housewives) and the women who read different magazines which were not included in her study (those aimed at college-aged women, working women or women from another race or class). She also did not address the fact that the majority of the women she studied read other magazines as well as women's magazines, such as *Time*, *Life* or *The Saturday Evening Post*, and therefore women's magazines formed only a small part of the influences on many housewives lives.⁷⁰ This chapter will study more carefully the treatment of the American woman in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, the most popular service magazine of the period, and show that although Friedan published excerpts from this publication which did support her claims, when the magazine is viewed as a whole a more balanced opinion becomes visible. This chapter will also present a more balanced view of the way middle-class American magazines treated the American woman by studying magazines aimed at younger readers, namely *Mademoiselle*, a magazine for college students and *Seventeen*, which was published for teenage girls. By studying a wider range of the periodicals that were available to women during this period, this chapter will present an alternative history of post war and Cold War women that questions the dogma of domesticity that has for so long blighted feminist historiography.

Joanne Meyerowitz claimed in her article „Beyond *The Feminine Mystique*: A Re-assessment of Post-war Mass Culture, 1946 – 1958' (1994) that “mass culture is neither wholly monolithic nor unrelentingly repressive” and that it “is rife with contradictions, ambivalence and competing voices”.⁷¹ This statement is as true of the magazines published today as it is of those Friedan studied; it is rare that a publication portrays one message only as their readership is often so diverse. By bringing to light the „other' side of women's magazines in the 1950s I am not attempting to suggest that the domestic portion did not exist, but that it was not as dominant as Friedan claimed. It must also be recognised when writing about magazines that many of the

women who bought the magazines did not read them as closely as do scholars when studying them, therefore the amount of influence which certain magazines had on an individual's daily life can never be accurately measured. As recognised by Stephanie Spencer in „Be Yourself: *Girl* and the Business of Growing Up in Late 1950s England', it must also be noted that, "all representations" presented within women's magazines "are constructs".⁷² The representations created by the magazines must be acceptable to the readers, but also to the advertisers, on whom the magazines rely. Therefore the „woman' created by women's magazines must be viewed in part as an attempt by advertisers to create a need for their product, and not as a truthful representation of the contemporary woman.⁷³ That women's magazines were so popular in the 1950s however makes this construct important to the study of the women who lived during this decade, as such a large proportion of women would have been familiar with it. Therefore, building an accurate portrait of the woman as represented by women's magazines in mid century America is crucial if historians are to fully understand the women that read them.

The All-Inclusive Nature of the Women's Magazine

The *Ladies' Home Journal* and other women's service magazines had huge circulations in the 1950s and were writing for diverse audiences who held opposing opinions.⁷⁴ Joanne Meyerowitz recognised that as a result of this many women's magazines often "advocated both the domestic and the non-domestic, sometimes in the same sentence".⁷⁵ Women's service magazines were vilified by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*. They were called out as henchmen of the „problem with no name' and blamed for what she saw as its meteoric rise. Friedan accused them of destroying the image of the independent heroine, of robbing younger readers of their career-orientated role-model and of trapping women in a world of "bedroom,

kitchen, sex, babies and home” where they were denied their own identity and lived vicariously through husband and children.⁷⁶ Yet these accusations are both unfounded and unfair as when studied, it quickly becomes apparent that more often than not these magazines were actually fighting against the feminine mystique, not helping to create it.

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan stated that “in the second half of the twentieth century in America, a woman’s world was confined to her own body and beauty, the charming of man, the bearing of babies, and the physical care and serving of husband, children and home. And this was no anomaly of a single issue of a single women’s magazine”.⁷⁷ Friedan claimed that the reason for this was because staff believed that the American woman belonged in the home, and therefore could not be convinced to take an interest in any events which occurred outside of it.⁷⁸ Friedan however failed to address the fact that housewives, students and working women alike all had ready access to television, radio and newspapers; in fact when the Smith College alumnae were asked in their reunion questionnaire whether or not they read a newspaper every day, 95% of married respondents said yes.⁷⁹ A monthly magazine is not an appropriate medium to discuss current news events as by the time it is published it is unlikely that the event would still be current. Every month however readers of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* were given several opportunities to read articles which, although not necessarily „current’, were not focused on “kinder, kuche, kirche”.⁸⁰ Joanne Meyerowitz argued that Margaret Hickey’s monthly “Public Affairs Dept.” column sent a clear message to readers that women should participate in politics outside the home.⁸¹ Another regular feature was a column written by Lord Halifax which included headings such as “The Last Chance to Win WWII” and “FDR Wanted George VI to Give Hong Kong to China”.⁸² The *Ladies’ Home Journal* also employed a woman who could not be further from the domestic ideal, journalist Dorothy Thompson, who contributed a monthly

column to the publication. Thompson was a celebrated journalist who had previously worked as a lecturer, a network news reporter for NBC radio and as a reporter for the *New York Post* in Germany where she had even interviewed Hitler. She was also heralded by *Time* magazine in 1939 as the most influential women in America, along with Eleanor Roosevelt. Thompson spent her career writing about important national issues including the rise of fascism, the threat of nuclear war and the Zionism debate, and the columns she wrote for the *Ladies' Home Journal* were no different.⁸³ Those featured regularly addressed political topics which had no specific link to a „woman's world' including the importance of finding a moral equivalent for war and a discussion about radioactivity and the effect it was having on the human race. Despite her achievements, journalistic status and lifestyle, Thompson was willing to write for the *Ladies' Home Journal* – her column continued to be a regular feature until her death in 1961 – which suggests that she did not view the women's service magazine as an unredeemable bastion of domesticity.

Service magazines in the 1950s, despite publishing articles and fiction which supported the choices made by the American housewife, did not attempt to keep her there against her will or deny her the freedom to choose her own path. They did not condemn the role of housewife and mother the way Friedan did, but neither did they denounce the choices of the career woman or suggest that working towards a career was in any way unfeminine. The *Ladies' Home Journal* recognised long before Friedan would that such a choice required women to take their education seriously, and consistently advised college and high school students to do so. Whilst many articles published in women's service magazines during this period did extol the values of finding and keeping a husband, it was rare that an article encouraged readers to choose love instead of an education or a career. “Red Roses” (1956) by Lucille Vaughan-Paine focused on

„Angela’, a student who prefers to stare at a boy she is infatuated with rather than paying attention in class. she neglects her schoolwork, which jeopardises her chances of getting into college. When he realises this however, Joe, the crush, chose to encourage her to focus on her studies rather than taking advantage. He tells her she is “just the sort of girl who would really go places in college”.⁸⁴ Later in the story Angela’s mother is caught shoplifting and Paine made it clear that this happened because she is bored and unfulfilled by her role; she is a victim of the „feminine mystique’. Angela begins to see college as a “kind of freedom” from a life in the home - her mother’s life - and decides to apply.⁸⁵ Angela’s story did not end with her marriage to Joe but instead with her decision to avoid her mother’s fate by attending college. The story also made it clear to readers that Angela did not choose to pursue academia instead of marriage; her dedication to her education made her more attractive to Joe. Despite being from the same magazine and time period this piece of magazine fiction presented a very different message to the fiction Friedan chose to include in *The Feminine Mystique*. Paine tried to educate readers to the problems caused by staying at home instead of striving to reach their full potential, which she showed could give them both independence and the ability to choose their own path.

The articles featured in the magazine also supported a woman’s right to work. In May 1957, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* published a piece which closely examined college education and its value to the women who put themselves through it. The writer, Nevitt Sanford PhD discovered that girls who attended college purely for social reasons “usually find the college work very hard and drop out during or at the end of the second year, having already gained what they wanted out of college”.⁸⁶ He then distinguished a second, separate group and identified that “the girls who make up the other type tend to be superior scholars. They may either be engaged or deeply in love, but do not feel that they must sacrifice their own individualities or their aim for

a career if they wish to marry”.⁸⁷ The students featured in this article were not shown to be chasing boys or planning kitchen showers, nor did the magazine encourage them to do so; the *Ladies’ Home Journal* supported the students’ right to be both independent and capable individuals and be desirable to men. The article recognised that some students chose to attend college with the intention of finding a husband, but also endeavoured to show readers that these girls did not constitute the majority of the student body. Sandford stated that “the actual interest students take in men as such is in reality fairly limited. To „fit in’ from the student culture standpoint calls for a certain amount of dating, but the code frowns on „too much’ or taking men too seriously”.⁸⁸ The magazine also did not suggest that the girl who „caught a husband’ early on in her college career and subsequently dropped out was either lucky or someone to be envied. In this article, the independent, capable intellectual was glorified, not the housewife.

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan accused contemporary women’s service magazines of creating a “fluffy and feminine” world where “women do not work, except housework and work to keep their bodies beautiful and to get and keep a man”.⁸⁹ Yet that women worked - not just from necessity but from desire as well - was reflected in every aspect of women’s magazines in the 1950s. The *Ladies’ Home Journal* published a quote (publishing short, stand alone passages from novels was common practice for the *Ladies’ Home Journal* at this time) from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* which stated that women

“need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do, they suffer from too rigid a constraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer, and it is narrow minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to knitting stockings, playing the piano and embroidering bags”.⁹⁰

That they chose to publish this quote is a clear signal that the staff of the *Ladies' Home Journal* did not believe, that women belonged in the home, and this was not an isolated occurrence.

Throughout the period 1950s the *Ladies' Home Journal* not only published articles, fiction and readers letters which encouraged both younger and older readers to begin preparing for a career, but also praised those who were already working, regardless of whether or not they had children or were working in a traditionally „male’ or „female’ sphere. Once again, Sandford promoted the healthy image of the career women, stating in his article that “students with professional ambitions often fare best during the senior year. Although virtually all of them plan to marry, marriage is for them an activity in which they will voluntarily choose to participate rather than something that is necessary for any sense of personal identity”.⁹¹ Even a cartoon published by the *Ladies' Home Journal* of a man proposing included the tagline “I want to ask you a very important question Marione, provided you don’t rush out and quit your job!”⁹²

To suggest that the *Ladies' Home Journal* did not approve of working mothers shows both a lack of research and a lack of understanding of the magazine during this period. At this time it was becoming increasingly common for women to go out to work rather than stay at home; a fifth of women with preschool aged children, and almost forty percent of women over 16 were in the workforce by 1960.⁹³ Of the female college graduates of 1955, almost eighty percent were in work by 1956.⁹⁴ Author Anita Loos, in an article entitled “This Brunette Prefers Work”, stated “I am only alive when I work... just remember that if you don’t work, you die”.⁹⁵ The *Ladies' Home Journal* both encouraged woman to work and attempted to make working life easier for women as well. As Nevitt Sandford’s article correctly identified, “the expectation today is that all college girls will at one time or another be wives and mothers *and* work at something outside of the home”, and the *Ladies' Home Journal* attempted to make the world

outside of the home an easier place for the scores of women who were venturing into it during this period.⁹⁶ Although Betty Friedan stated in *The Feminine Mystique* that “the very suggestion of need [for day-care centres] brought hysterical outcries from educated housewives and the purveyors of the mystique”, there were several instances of support for day care in women’s magazines throughout this period. Hickey openly used her influence to call for more day care centres to be established throughout the United States, and even devoted an entire column to raising awareness of the importance of day care and how necessary it had become for a large number of women.⁹⁷ Day care was not only helpful for women who chose to work to avoid boredom or to fulfil a personal need, it was vital to those who had no choice but to work to support their family. Recognising that this need existed was a huge step, as the need for day care had not been widely supported even during the crisis of the Second World War.⁹⁸

Betty Friedan also ignored the fact that magazines during this period warned their readers against marrying young. Despite berating the *Ladies’ Home Journal* in *The Feminine Mystique* for publishing an article entitled “Don’t Be Afraid to Marry Young”, she failed to make any reference to the large amount of information the magazines did offer their readers about the risks they faced.⁹⁹ A story entitled „The French Doll’ (1956) focused on Anne, a young girl of fifteen who asks a magic doll to grant her wish to fall in love, and in return it asks for her freedom. Later that afternoon she sees a boy she has not met before, who asks her to walk with him. Anne is certain that he is the one she was supposed to fall in love with so she consents and later he kisses her. Despite this fairytale outcome, Anne finds that she has had a boring afternoon with him. Anne is unimpressed by „love’ and regrets relinquishing her freedom. She asks the French Doll to reverse her wish and the doll agrees, but only in return for her new grown-up dress and shoes. Anne willingly relinquishes them up as she had not enjoyed herself that day.¹⁰⁰ This is a

moralistic tale which warned readers against the dangers of marrying at a young age. Anne wanted to grow up too fast and as a result lost her freedom and her happiness. „Love’ was not enough to fulfil her and she became bored. The grown-up dress and shoes serve as symbols of adulthood, and by returning them Anne shows that she will be happier if she remains a child for as long as she can. The intention of this story was to warn readers that girls who give up their childhood too early by marrying at a young age will most likely be disappointed and end up bored and unfulfilled too. This story certainly did not promote early marriage to readers.

This message was not only relayed in the magazine’s fiction. In “Is College Education Wasted on Women”, Nevitt Sandford stated that in his experience, marriages which were rushed into straight from college rarely worked out. Even when Clifford R. Adams PhD, writer of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*’s regular marital advice column, “Making Marriage Work”, was asked in September 1956 if girls who married young were more likely to get divorced, he stated quite categorically “yes, more than 60% of all women who get divorces were married before twenty”.¹⁰¹ As the median age for girls to marry in 1956 was twenty, the magazine risked offending its readership by being so openly opposed to early marriage.¹⁰² Despite this, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* chose to condemn the trend towards marrying young in an attempt to protect readers and their families from the pain of an unhappy marriage or the humiliation of divorce. As Friedan “sat for many days in the New York Public Library, going back through the bound volumes of American women’s magazines” and mentions Sandford by name in *The Feminine Mystique*, it is unlikely that she was not familiar with the arguments put forth here.¹⁰³ However she chose not to make it clear in her book that the women’s service magazines of the 1950s put forth both sides of the debate on early marriages, and therefore were not the villains she made them seem.

The Message was not New

Friedan claimed in *The Feminine Mystique* that “for fifteen years there was no word of this yearning in the millions of words written about women, in all of the columns, books and articles by experts telling women that their role was to seek fulfilment as wives and mothers”, however this statement, in its entirety, is untrue.¹⁰⁴ Jessica Weiss claimed in *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom and Social Change* that Friedan’s own views actually “echoed a significant strain of positive opinion about women and work that developed in the 1950s and that she ignored in her research”; in *Shaping our Mothers World: The World of Women’s Magazines*, author Nancy Walker suggested that the demise of the *Woman’s Home Companion* in January of 1957 “sent a signal to the other leading service magazines that definitions of ‘home’ and the ‘domestic’ had to be more flexible and inclusive”.¹⁰⁵ This message was well received; women’s magazines had not only recognised the problem, but condemned it, made fun of it, and suggested ways to fix it long before Betty Friedan named it in 1963.

To claim that there had been “no mention” at all was absurd as Friedan herself had published excerpts of her research and writing long before *The Feminine Mystique* was published, and the very fact that she found an audience for her work, and a publication willing to feature it demonstrates that there was an interest in the issues before Friedan drew attention to them in her book. In 1961, Friedan published an article in the *Smith College Alumnae Quarterly* in which she tried to persuade current Smith College undergraduates not to rush into marriage and to take their classes seriously as otherwise they would regret it later, as her generation did.¹⁰⁶ Although this publication cannot be classed as a ‘women’s magazine’ its primary readership was of course women, and the article had an impact upon society as it was cited as a source in Morton M. Hunt’s *Her Infinite Variety*, a predecessor of *The Feminine Mystique* which was

published in 1962 (*Her Infinite Variety* was also actually considered by many of Friedan's reviewers to be a better study of the topic than *The Feminine Mystique*).¹⁰⁷

Two years later, to coincide with the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan published another article in the *Smith College Alumnae Quarterly* based on her research. Alongside it appeared a similar article by author Cynthia P. Setton, which received more praise from readers the following month than Friedan's own article did. That Setton was capable of writing an article with a similar theme to Friedan's at the same time as her suggests that Friedan's findings were neither unique nor fresh.

In reality, women had been sharing their frustrations and complaining about the 'problem with no name' so much in women's magazines throughout the 1950s that when an excerpt of *The Feminine Mystique* was published in *McCall's* in 1963, a substantial number of readers wrote in to complain that they were sick of hearing about the drudgery of being a housewife. One woman proclaimed that she was "tired of hearing about the poor little housewife who is trapped, frustrated, guilty, wasting her life, unappreciated, dependent, passive and whatever else she is called".¹⁰⁸ Another declared that she would "not be a sheep following the rest of the herd because I have certain ideals and ideas. And although I was married at 19 and left college after 1 and a ½ years, no statistic can convince me that my life is empty and that my work is not 'serious' and important to society".¹⁰⁹ Some readers even threatened to cancel their subscriptions if *McCall's* did not stop publishing articles about it.¹¹⁰

The very people whom Friedan accused of causing the problem, the staff of women's magazines, had not only been researching the same issues and publishing both articles and fiction identifying that the bores of housework and unfulfillment among housewives was causing depression, but had even suggested the same cure as Friedan herself would later advise. There

are suggestions of dissatisfaction with the „feminine mystique’ throughout the magazines, for example, a small cartoon in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* featured a harried woman surrounded by children, standing next to a man in a hat and coat carrying a suitcase. The caption reads “next time, *I’m* going on a business trip”.¹¹¹ This woman cannot be construed as being part of the domestic idyll that Friedan suggested the *Ladies’ Home Journal* exclusively portrayed; she is clearly dissatisfied and wants to escape the home, into her husband’s world of work.

Many features included in magazines during this period made housewives’ dissatisfaction with their role even more obvious. An article written by Shirley Jackson in *Mademoiselle* in December of 1956, entitled “On Being a Faculty Wife” examined her life as the stay-at-home wife of a college professor. It was a candid portrait of her and other „faculty wives’ dissatisfaction with their role, and their envy of the current college students who still had a chance to do something with their lives. Jackson recalled conversations with other wives at parties, remembering mostly that they have nothing to talk about because their lives are not varied, “ „Hello!’ we cry gaily „you here too? How are the children? Did you get to that perfectly ripping affair at that other student house? Are the children well? Is there any news in a raise in faculty salaries? And the children – how are they?’ ”.¹¹² Jackson admitted that all they were able to discuss were issues which concern their husbands or children as they had no individual interests or pursuits of their own. Jackson clearly defined the problems in her life as dissatisfaction, loneliness and unfulfillment. She recalled that one of her husband’s students was shocked to discover that she had completed 4 years of college, and asks her “couldn’t you get a job?” The student later told her about her summer of travelling, Jackson replied “my little boy is four now”.¹¹³ In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan identified Jackson as a „housewife writer’, one of a clan of magazine writers who wrote about their experiences as housewives whilst

simultaneously pursuing careers as playwrights, novelists and poets. Friedan claimed that as Jackson pursued a professional career as well as managing her household she could not possibly understand the torment that „just a housewife’ was forced to endure on a day to day basis. But to deny Jackson insight into the plight of the bored housewife is to deny Friedan the same. As Daniel Horowitz recognised in *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique*, Friedan herself spent her years as a suburban housewife working as a freelance writer; Horowitz claimed that “writing for magazines such as *Redbook* prepared her for *The Feminine Mystique*. Through her writing, and by her own experiences, she had learned about married women’s lives in American suburbs”.¹¹⁴ Horowitz places equal importance on her career as a preparation for „discovery’ as he does on her own experiences. Even though Jackson was not a full-time housewife, she was still able to recognise that many of the „faculty wives’ she met through her husband’s work were dissatisfied and unfulfilled, just as Friedan did. By writing about it and making fun of it she also enabled the *Ladies’ Home Journal* to inform readers that if they were not happy, they were not alone.

The *Ladies’ Home Journal*’s article “Is College Education Wasted on Women” attempted to offer solutions to support those girls and women who were suffering from the „feminine mystique’. It recognised that society was beginning to realise that some women were not satisfied with their roles as housewife and mother, and suggested that this was because “the idea has somehow become implanted that they must choose between marriage and serious work” and therefore are hesitant to commit themselves to a career.¹¹⁵ The solution for current students, the article suggests, is to convince them that “it is not unfeminine to be intelligent, to use one’s head, to have deep interests” and to instead popularise the fact that children who were most well adjusted had “mothers who had performed or were performing some activity that required a high

level of education”.¹¹⁶ Sandford’s intention was to change the public’s perception of the well-educated career girl by informing readers that women who worked actually made *better* mothers than those who stayed at home all day. By doing this, Sandford was supporting both stay-at-home mothers who were dissatisfied and college students who feared ‘getting interested’.

With regards to older women who were already caught up in the ‘feminine mystique’, the article both suggested the same solution as Friedan did, and warned against the same problems. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan claimed that “the only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own. There is no other way. But a job, any job, is not the answer - in fact, it can be part of the trap”.¹¹⁷ Sandford suggested that women who had a feeling of “emptiness and boredom” should either return to college or the workplace, but also warned against engaging in only part-time work or ‘just a job’ to give them a sense of being busy.¹¹⁸ He stated that this would not fulfil them any more than their housework. Rather than extolling to women the values and personal satisfaction to be found in fulfilling their ‘role’, the magazines of the 1950s had instead recognised the problems inherent in this ideal, and were attempting to deal with it more than half a decade earlier than Friedan. There is an indication in Friedan’s collected papers at the Schlesinger Library that she was aware of and had read Sandford’s article before beginning her work on *The Feminine Mystique*; it is possible that, rather than believing that there was no mention of the ‘feminine mystique’ in women’s magazines during the 1950s, her work in truth grew out of the discussions of the topic which she read about within them.

Thinking Too Small

The samples which Betty Friedan examined in *The Feminine Mystique* were too stereotypical and monochrome to allow her findings to be generalised to the public at large. Rather than studying a variety of women and women's magazines, Friedan only studied a small sub-section of society, but generalised the theory she formed from this research to include all women, not just the few she had studied. Friedan is guilty of the same error - of creating a hypothesis from the study of a small number of subjects and then applying it to all of society - that she accuses Freud of in her chapter "The Sexual Solipsism of Sigmund Freud". In many ways her research has become as far-reaching and influential in her own field as Freud's was in his. Had Friedan included a wider range of subjects, she would have reached a different conclusion about the plight of the American woman during the early Cold War years.

Of the magazine fiction Betty Friedan analysed in *The Feminine Mystique*, six stories were from the *Ladies' Home Journal*, four were from *Good Housekeeping*, three were from *McCall's*, five were from *Redbook* and one was from *Mademoiselle*. With the exception of *Mademoiselle* all of these magazines were service magazines aimed at homemakers and were published with the intention of providing domestic advice to white middle-class housewives.¹¹⁹ Although the content published in the *Ladies' Home Journal* was not as one-sided as Friedan had suggested in *The Feminine Mystique*, it was aimed at readers who had chosen a career as a housewife, at least for a period of their life, and therefore much of its content was domestically orientated. If this did not appeal to a reader in the 1950s however there were many other, more career-orientated magazines available on the stand. In the USA in the 1950s, women's magazines were hugely diverse and different magazines were published with different target

audiences in mind; *Life Magazine*, *Time Magazine*, *The New Yorker* and *The Saturday Evening Post* were the magazines that were read most by those who responded to Friedan's alumnae questionnaire conducted in 1957, not the women's service magazines. These magazines are classed as 'general interest' and as such have no specific target market, nor are they gender specific. The articles published in these magazines represented a more diverse set of interests than those which appeared in magazines attempting to appeal to women. A selection of magazines which were aimed at women, but were not classed as 'women's magazine's' - publications such as the *Smith College Alumni Quarterly* and other college alumni magazines – were also available at this time. Friedan chose however to limit her selection purely to the service magazines and was therefore only able to present one aspect of the way women were represented by women's magazines of the 1950s, and only a small section of the culture they were exposed to.¹²⁰

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan argued that the way a woman had been represented in a particular story printed by *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1959 was the only way in which enterprising women were represented by magazines during the early Cold War period. „The Sandwich Maker' (1959) focused on a mother who wanted to make extra money by starting a sandwich business preparing lunches for her husband's male colleagues as her husband would not trust her with her own charge account; "she earns \$52.50 a week, except that she forgets to count costs, and doesn't remember what a gross is, so she has to hide 8,640 sandwich bags behind the furnace".¹²¹ Her business is a hopeless failure and she ends up working herself to the bone for \$9 profit. The story has a happy ending when the protagonist discovers that she is pregnant again. She is relieved that she can give it all up and return to her true profession, motherhood.¹²² This story represents the conservative side of the *Ladies' Home Journal's* fiction.

It was a humorous story which made light of a housewife's doomed attempts to strike out on her own, but it clearly suggested that the protagonist should return to the traditional role of housewife rather than attempt to enter the masculine world of business. Yet this was not representative of all women's magazines, as enterprising and independent women were regularly recognised and supported by other publications during this period. Younger readers were encouraged by *Seventeen* to take on vacation jobs such as waiting tables or babysitting; one article even suggested that readers should start their own typing business over the summer. This not only encouraged girls to work, but also to learn independence and self sufficiency, qualities which did not fit well into the image of the 'feminine mystique'. *Seventeen* magazine also supported women's right to work outside of the home. In 1957, in response to a letter from a teenage girl who claimed that she felt estranged from her mother because her mother worked full-time, *Seventeen's* agony aunt replied that she should be proud to have a mother who had a career as she would benefit from her "extra talent and experience". The agony aunt did not berate the girl's mother for neglecting her child and putting herself first. *Mademoiselle* published an article in June 1957 entitled 'Underwater Enterprise' which focused on a woman who, after training as an underwater photographer and working for several years promoting a marine park, had decided to break away and establish her own underwater photography business. The writer praised both her courage and business acumen and did not attempt to disguise the fact that the reason for her career move - simply a desire to earn more money - was a typically masculine one. The article highlighted the fact that her first major client was her former employer.¹²³ Despite being a woman she was the best in her field, and her former employer recognised this and judged her on her ability, not her sex. There is little that was 'fluffy and feminine' about the woman featured in this article, but the magazine was comfortable celebrating her success regardless.

This magazine did not suggest to readers that career women posed a threat to the home and chose instead to support the mother's right to work and acknowledge that it could benefit the family as a whole. *Mademoiselle* supported a woman's right to pursue business interests outside of the home regardless of who she was or how she chose to do it.

Mademoiselle and *Seventeen* preferred instead to encourage their readers to prepare to enter a career upon graduation from school or college rather than focus their energies on encouraging housewives to *return* to the workplace as the women's service magazines did. Both magazines informed readers that they probably would have no choice but to work outside of the home for a far longer period of time that they realised. *Seventeen* published an article asking readers "How Long Will You Work?". It informed readers that, for most of them, it would be for longer than perhaps they had originally assumed. The article recommended that, because of this, they should attempt to find a career that they enjoyed rather than just rush into a job for the sake of the pay check;¹²⁴ One of *Seventeen*'s main concerns throughout the late 1950s was ensuring that readers were looking for a satisfying career. The magazine encouraged readers by publishing articles and features about other young girls' attempts to discover which career path they were interested in pursuing, like the 4-H groups that tried out different jobs during holidays to see if they were suited to them, and by publishing information about different careers to give their readers inspiration.¹²⁵ Rather than promoting the mystique by suggesting it was unhealthy for women to work at a career, *Seventeen* informed readers that they should begin preparing themselves for a life working outside the home. By attempting to educate them about the different career options which were available to them the magazine also increased readers chances of finding work that they enjoyed, not „just a job’.

By only including in her study information which supported her theory, Betty Friedan presented an unfair and skewed image of the societal pressures that affected women in the 1950s in America. The magazines in her study did not present as one-sided an image of the perfect woman as she claimed, female enrolment in college was not in peril but was increasing. Betty Friedan distorted her study by handpicking parts of her research while ignoring the rest, and in doing this she has caused an incorrect image of 1950s America to penetrate the popular consciousness.

Chapter Two

Smith College Women and the
Education they Received

The women's service magazine was not the only offender held responsible in the 1960s, for the rise of the 'feminine mystique' in the USA; Friedan was equally critical of the US education system, especially of higher education and the experience and opportunities it offered female students. She claimed that "the college's failure to educate women for an identity beyond their sexual role was undoubtedly a crucial factor in perpetuating... if not creating, that conformity". Friedan believed that this indoctrination of the American teenager began in high school, where female students discovered that it served them better to replace their earlier interest in geology or poetry with an interest in popularity and dating, and this understanding continued with them into their college lives. When they arrived on campus, those who were under the spell of the 'feminine mystique' went "through the motions, but they defend[ed] themselves against the impersonal passions of the mind and spirit that college might instil in them". The culprits were the educators who, "instead of challenging the girls' childish, rigid parochial pre-conceptions of a woman's role, they cater[ed] to it by offering a potpourri of liberal arts courses". Male students were unaffected by this social trend as "married or not, [they were] there to stretch their minds, to find their own identity". Friedan claimed that American colleges taught female students "not to work hard, think too often, ask too many questions" as they believed these qualities were unfeminine, and would hinder the fulfilment of their sexual function.

The intention of this chapter is to portray a different version of 'college girl' through an analysis of Smith College's student body at the end of the 1950s. The female college student as featured in *The Feminine Mystique* did exist, but not with the uniformity that Friedan suggested. Many of the female students who attended college in the 1950s, and the men and women who educated them, held a more emancipated view of women's education than Friedan represented.

In this chapter I will explore the experience had by female students in more depth, taking into account the factors which made college more, not less important and challenging for women during this period. Attaining a college degree at this time was no easy feat, and was only complicated further if a student's main intention was to find a husband. Entrance requirements were high and once students arrived, privileges, such as time away from campus for dates, were bestowed strictly on those students who took their work seriously.¹²⁶ Even to obtain the opportunity to date meant maintaining a solid work ethic in the 1950s. Simply "going through the motions" was not an option for the students who attended college in the 1950s. Many Students demonstrated a deep interest in both their classes and their school; they voluntarily increased their college workload by taking on extra-curricular responsibilities or by involving themselves in the debates or protests which were occurring outside of the campus. The launch of Sputnik (1957) and the heightening of the space race also caused a shift in the way the American youth was educated. All available minds were pushed into science without regard to sex, which opened up opportunities for women in higher paying scientific jobs. This helped to change both women's outlook on working outside the home and general opinions of what women were capable of achieving.

This chapter will detail the dedication and individuality demonstrated by female students in 1950s America, focusing on the women who attended Smith College between 1957 and 1963, and explain the different facets of a student's life and demonstrate ways in which they frequently stepped outside of the world Betty Friedan created for them in *The Feminine Mystique*. College in the 1950s was a difficult and demanding environment, and many of the women discussed here used their time there to gain a first class education, make lifelong friends and develop interests on national issues which many remained engaged with throughout their time at college. The only

thing which the majority of students did not appear to do with anything resembling the immediacy described by Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* was pursue a husband.

The Academic Smith Student

Just getting a place at college was becoming an increasingly difficult task for high school students in the 1950s. More and more students applied each year, which increased the competition and therefore only the brightest and most hard working were given the opportunity to matriculate. The number of women who applied to college rose every year after 1951 and by 1957 more than one million women were attending institutions of higher education.¹²⁷ There was a further fifty percent increase by 1963. Friedan argued in *The Feminine Mystique* that the proportion of women to men had fallen dramatically after the end of the Second World War. Although she was correct in this declaration, she failed to recognise that when the proportion of women to men was at its highest in 1944 – women made up 49% of the college population that year – the number of women in attendance was still only one third of the number of women who were attending in the year she published *The Feminine Mystique*.¹²⁸ The proportion of women to men had decreased not because there were fewer women in attendance, but because, due to the GI Bill, there were more men in the USA eager and able to attend college. The rise in demand from men for college places was not accompanied by a fall in demand amongst American women. The number of women applying to college rose continuously throughout the 1950s, which in turn made the application process more competitive.

Due to their status and reputations for excellence, Ivy League colleges and other Eastern institutions such as the Seven Sisters colleges, experienced an even more dramatic rise in the number of applications they received; at Smith the number of applications rose by ten percent in

1951 alone.¹²⁹ As the decade continued, the Seven Sisters colleges began receiving so many applications that they elected to raise the fee for submitting an application from \$15 to \$20, but even this did not stem the flow of applications from potential students. By 1957 the number of students applying to study at college had risen by such a proportion that college admissions offices found it almost impossible to process them and were subsequently forced to create the early admissions system, a system which allowed students to apply early to one college only, thereby removing those accepted from the standard admissions process. This reduced the number of applications that colleges received every year, but also forced high-schoolers both to decide which one college they wanted to apply for before they had even begun their senior year - and to reach the high standard required for entry at a younger age.

Betty Friedan claimed in *The Feminine Mystique* that the new way of educating the youth of America excluded girls from the study of what she referred to as „pure’ science; chemistry, biology and physics, as they were not considered to be feminine, and that even if a student elected to pursue such a subject, the school guidance counsellors would soon discourage them.¹³⁰ Yet to even be considered for a place at prestigious Smith College, high school girls had to provide evidence that they had completed a certain number of credits, not just in „feminine’ subjects such as English, history and art, but also in traditionally masculine ones which included science and maths. This practise was enforced when Betty Friedan matriculated in 1938, and had not changed fifteen years later when she returned to the college in the 1950s to begin her research.¹³¹ If students wanted to be considered for a prestigious college, they had no choice but to study both masculine and feminine subjects, and they were required to excel in each. It was also recommended that students took a preparatory course prior to matriculation to prepare them for the “work [they] will be asked to do at college level”.¹³² It is unfair to suggest that women

who were bright enough to have received an offer to study at Smith College in the 1950s were there only to meet men and find a husband, especially as Smith College was notoriously difficult to get into and did not even admit male students. Just applying and getting accepted to college in the late 1950s was a very difficult and taxing process which required students to make big life decisions at a young age and to aim for better grades in high school than they had ever been asked to before.

The environment that the students who made it through the application process found themselves in at Smith College was not one that was conducive to finding a husband, nor to training to be a housewife and mother. The first hurdle students who were there in search of a husband found themselves up against was that until the end of junior year they were not allowed to spend more than eight nights in a semester away from the college, which therefore left them with few options of how to even meet a suitor, let alone get to know one; Smith College was and is a women only college and is located in Northampton, a small town in Western Massachusetts. It is situated more than two hours away from any Ivy League school, and in the 1950s public transport to Boston, New Haven or New York was limited. The nearest men were to be found at Amherst College, a private men's college roughly 30 minutes away by bus. At Amherst however Smith students were in competition with the female students of nearby University of Massachusetts and the entire student body of fellow Seven Sisters college Mount Holyoke, which is also isolated in the Pioneer Valley; eligible male students were far outnumbered by eligible females in Western Massachusetts during the 1950s. If students intended to mingle with boys on a regular basis, Smith College was not the ideal school for them. Smith College students also encountered a different problem if they did not maintain an acceptable grade point average: the Registrar's list. Once on this list a student's privileges were removed until their GPA

improved. These freedoms included the opportunity to „cut’ classes and those precious eight nights away from campus per semester.¹³³ Without these, it would have been very difficult for a student to socialise with anyone who did not attend the college, which excluded all male acquaintances. Even those students who were more interested the social side of college than the intellectual would have had to take their work seriously, for students in the 1950s the only way to experience the social aspects college had to offer was to apply themselves to the academic.

If students chose to matriculate at Smith College for any reason other than to learn, they would have quickly found themselves struggling with the high academic demands. Smith College is a private college, and in the 1950s its faculty prided themselves on the quality of the liberal arts education they imparted to their students and the students were expected to maintain high standards. The courses that were offered in the 1950s were not designed with the future Mrs America in mind; they were intended - as they were at men’s colleges - to train brilliant minds and form useful members of society. Instead of taking courses in home economics to learn how to balance a chequebook, students studied international economics and learned about international investments, arguments for and against free trade and protection, current problems of the international trading system and how to overcome them and the foreign economic policy of the USA; rather than studying the science of getting red wine out of a table cloth, students took atomic physics, intro to quantum mechanics, theoretical spectroscopy, nuclear physics and zoology.¹³⁴ There is as yet no applicable link between theoretical spectroscopy and spot cleaning. Students were offered a class on „The Modern Family’, but it was not a „marriage prep’ course; it was an academic class which addressed the structure of the American family from a sociological and psychological point of view and required students to take a pre-requisite class in basic psychology.¹³⁵ Students at Smith College in the 1950s were given the opportunity to study many

different and interesting disciplines, but „housewifery’ wasn’t one of them. New classes, which were added each semester throughout the decade also did not signal a decline in the academic standards of Smith College and in fact demonstrated that the college was moving towards a more academic curriculum. With each new class that was added to the catalogue, a new academic challenge was put before the students. Some examples of the courses added to the catalogue in the late 1950s include „Problems in Romantic Classicism’, ‘Introduction to the History of Astronomy’, „Theoretical and Practical Phonetics’ and „Differential Geography’.¹³⁶ No classes were added which could be considered conducive to household management.¹³⁷

New classes were not the only sign that the academic bar was being raised rather than lowered at Smith College during the 1950s. Changes were also being made to the system of exams used for both midterms and finals. Whereas in previous years students who had chosen to take three or more classes despite knowing that the exams for each class were scheduled for the same day (the exam timetable was available to students at the time of choosing their classes), they were able to negotiate with professors to have one or more of their exams moved to a different day to allow them an easier schedule.¹³⁸ This practice was ended at the end of Fall semester in 1957. As the classes tended to schedule exams during class time, a student who had crammed all her classes into just a few days, rather than spreading them over the whole week, found herself forced to take all of her exams at once. This practice may have been instituted to encourage students to choose classes based upon what they wanted to study rather than with long weekends in mind. This change forced students to either take more care when choosing their classes or to accept the rigorous exam schedule. Whichever option students chose required them to take more responsibility for ensuring that the quality of their schoolwork was up to scratch than they had done previously.

The Interested Smith Student

Despite the fact that in *The Feminine Mystique* Betty Friedan claimed that there was an unwritten rule on the Smith College campus which prevented students from discussing classes unless they were actually in one most Smith students in the 1950s took their schoolwork seriously.¹³⁹ Friedan claimed that among the new generation there was “an unwritten rule barring ‚shop talk’ about courses, intellectual talk” whereas when she was a Smith student she spent hours “arguing what-is-truth, art-for-art’s-sake, religion, sex, war and peace, Freud, Marx and all the things that were wrong with the world”.¹⁴⁰ Friedan inferred that this difference was caused because the class of ’42 took their education seriously, whereas the new generation of students were not interested in their classes.

Friedan was mistaken in both of her claims. In an article Friedan wrote, which discussed the responses to the questionnaire she received from her fellow graduates from the class of 1942, she revealed that her fellow students were not as hard-working as she had claimed. In the article Friedan argued that her contemporaries regretted only one thing, “that they did not work harder in college” and take more of an interest in their classes when they were young. There are similar inconsistencies with her claims about the class of 1958. Whilst the student whom Friedan quoted in *The Feminine Mystique* claimed that “we never have bull sessions about abstract things” she did not clarify what she considered to be an abstract topic of conversation, nor did Friedan explain further. There is no way of knowing therefore what this particular student actually meant by her comment, only how Friedan interpreted it.

This student was not however, the only student whom Friedan interviewed when she visited Smith’s campus, she was just one of the lucky ones whose comments made it into print.

No researcher can publish all of their findings but the excerpts of the interviews chosen by Friedan show a clear bias towards less interested students. Other students interviewed demonstrated a fervent interest in their classes and learning as a whole. One such student claimed, in direct contrast to the student quoted above, that she often discussed her classes and other “intellectual things” with other members of her house whilst at the lunch table. Her comments were not included in *The Feminine Mystique*, nor did Friedan give any suggestion that she took this student’s college experiences into consideration when formulating her theories on the modern college student.¹⁴¹

The women who attended Smith College in the late 1950s did take a „deep enough’ interest in their classes to discuss it with fellow students when they were not forced to. In direct contradiction to Friedan’s opinion, writers on the staff of the *Sophian* stated in 1958 that it was a common sight to see students on the stairs after class discussing what they had just learned, or even something from a previous class, and this was not only the case for traditionally „feminine’ classes such as English or art, but was common among physics, chemistry or even astronomy students as well.¹⁴² Betty Friedan chose to use only her informant’s report to corroborate her theory; had she included, or indeed even replaced these comments with the more substantial information she had herself gathered from the other Smith students she interviewed, Friedan would not have falsely claimed that female students in the 1950s were so disinterested in their schoolwork that they refused to discuss it outside of the classroom. To infer that an entire generation of young women took no interest in the work they spent four years of their lives studying based on one vague statement from one college student is either a demonstration of Friedan’s poor research skills, or confirmation to suggest that she intentionally attempted to make the „problem’ worse than it was by ignoring valid evidence to the contrary.¹⁴³

Most female students attended college in the 1950s for similar reasons, and with similar intentions, as their male counterparts; to study, to learn and to train for a career, and both Smith students and their teachers attempted to ensure that they were receiving the best education available. Smith College's president, Benjamin F Wright, met every year with the presidents of the other Seven Sisters colleges to compare the institutions and to make sure each one still offered education at the highest level, and to learn from each other's experiences. This allowed him to ensure that the women who chose to study at Smith were receiving an education comparable to any of the top Eastern women's colleges. Students themselves also took care to ensure that they were receiving the best education available to them, and were disappointed if they did not come out on top when Smith was compared to other institutions of higher education. In October of 1957, an article was published in *The Sophian*, which examined the level of education both male and female students received in Europe. The writer was outraged to discover that at both secondary and tertiary level, the European education system had revealed itself to be far better than that which was on offer in America.¹⁴⁴ The article was a scathing indictment of the American higher education system and accused educators both at Smith College and further afield of not stretching American youth's minds as far as they were capable of going. The writer did not request that her educators provide students with more courses on marriage and the family, despite living in an era during which, if Friedan's version of history is correct, young women were under the spell of the feminine mystique. The student who wrote this article cared enough to take a serious interest in her edification and wanted the very best, academically focused, education available to her. Many of the women who were in attendance at Smith College towards the end of the 1950s did not merely want the social accolade of being a

„Smith girl’, they wanted everything else that came with it, including an education that allowed them to compete with anyone, male or female, American or foreign.

Friedan attempted to demonstrate in the *Feminine Mystique* that students had become disconnected from the academic side of college life by publishing an extract from an interview she had conducted with a Smith College professor during her 1958 trip. The psychology professor had complained to her that “[he] couldn’t schedule the final seminar for the senior honors students. Too many kitchen showers interfered. None of them considered the seminar sufficiently important to postpone their kitchen showers”.¹⁴⁵ His belief is in direct opposition however to the Smith College student government, who had the year before passed legislation to change the way school societies were run, as seniors were so devoted to their studies that they no longer had time to take a serious interest in non-academic pursuits. The senior students who held the positions of authority in the student organisations complained that running societies did not leave them enough time to focus on their studies as graduation drew nearer. Rather than do away with the organisations altogether, they recommended that the less academically burdened juniors should take on the top roles. This allowed juniors the opportunity to take part in and gain valuable experience from running various student organisations, a useful attribute in post-graduation job hunts, but also gave them the extra time needed to devote to their studies, in their senior year, when it really counted.¹⁴⁶

Friedan was aware before she visited Smith College that female seniors were actually far more serious about their work than society made them out to be, as other students she had interviewed beforehand had discussed this with her. One student informed Friedan that “anyone who goes through senior year is serious about it; too much work, too much money invested”.¹⁴⁷ Passing the exams and meeting all the necessary requirements to make it as far as senior year

required a large amount of hard work and dedication, and once a student became a senior this workload only increased. This student believed that no one would put themselves through this trial or waste the money for tuition fees if they were not serious about getting a good education – and the only way to do this was to take your classes seriously. This opinion was also corroborated by the Smith College yearbook for 1958, *The Hamper*. A spread entitled „weekends’ shows a pictorial account of how the students had spent their weekends that year.¹⁴⁸ The first photo shows group of cheerful looking young women at an art gallery studying and discussing artwork. The second, the largest picture, is of a girl, alone in her room, studying. The final picture, which is the smallest and appears in the corner at the bottom of the page, shows a girl and a boy riding bikes together, presumably intended to represent a date. These pictures, it can be assumed, were intended to suggest to the viewer that Smith College students preferred to have fun with friends in their spare time, rather than hunt down a boyfriend and more importantly, valued their education over their marriageability. As yearbooks are traditionally created by students themselves, this also suggests that this was how the students actually *wanted* to be portrayed as well, once again refuting Friedan’s claim that students at Smith in the 1950s were concerned only with „catching a husband’.

At the end of the 1950s, a greater proportion of the student body had chosen to become members of honors programs, academic societies and research societies than had ever done in previous years. By 1956, there were so many students enrolled in the honors program that the number of Smith College faculty members involved in the honors program had to be increased, and the college even considered the possibility of limiting enrolment in the program as no more honor students could sensibly be catered for. In 1958, 17.5% of students graduated Cum Laude. This contrasts with just 9% of students when Betty Friedan’s more „conscientious’ class of ,42

had graduated 16 years earlier.¹⁴⁹ The percentage of students who took the time to study for the higher level honors classes had almost doubled between Friedan's own graduation and the time when she began her research at Smith College. She argued that modern students were not interested in the academic side of college life, but it is clear that this simply was not the case at Smith College at the end of the 1950s.

It is unlikely that the statement made by Friedan's psychology professor in *The Feminine Mystique* was a lie, but due to the level of dedication demonstrated by many Smith seniors during this period it is also unlikely that it was a common occurrence. It is possible that the professor was very unlucky in the selection of students who elected to take his class that semester and received only students who *were* pre-occupied by marriage; it is also possible however that he could not schedule a final seminar because his students did not think it would be worth their while, not because they were too busy, but rather because perhaps the class had already been graded, they had already achieved enough credits from other classes or even because this particular psychology professor was not an engaging educator. President Wright was actually forced to reprimand the entire geology department in the Fall semester of 1958 because a study conducted at the college had claimed they were substandard teachers who were incapable of, or at the very least did not try to engage the students in their classes or encourage them to study geology as their major. The geology department retaliated by blaming their own shortcomings on the students. The department head claimed that "certain attitudes inherent in the college population and in part certainly beyond our control, are without doubt factors in determining the number of majors we have".¹⁵⁰ The „attitude' they were referring to was their belief that students regarded science as an unfeminine subject and therefore to apply themselves to it would make them a social outcast. The same study that had identified the geology

department's shortcomings however also identified that science as a major was swiftly increasing in popularity among Smith College students, and that this increase was in part because there was *no* stigma attached to science majors by other students in the College.¹⁵¹ It is certainly plausible that the geology department unfairly accused the students of faults they were not guilty of in an attempt to shift the blame away from themselves. It is also possible therefore that Friedan's esteemed professor, whom, she informed her readers, was on the eve of his retirement, had lost the ability to relate to his younger audience, but claimed that students "refused to let themselves get interested" rather than admitting or acknowledging his own incapability in engaging them.¹⁵²

Betty Friedan was, to some extent, correct in her claim that during the 1950s Smith College played host to some students who "did not let themselves get interested", but their apathy was not necessarily caused by the spectre of the 'feminine mystique', as she had suggested.¹⁵³ It was not uncommon, nor is it uncommon today, for a number of students to refuse to take their work seriously because they were bored by academic life or because they wish to be seen as 'cool'. Especially in the midst of the beat generation, in a world on the brink of welcoming the counterculture, 'cool' meant disconnected from society, which included formal education. It should be noted that the student who informed Friedan that she "never had bull sessions" was described by Friedan as "cool".¹⁵⁴ Especially where extra-curricular activities were concerned, being too involved, too dedicated or in fact showing any form of interest at all was not considered 'cool' in the US in the 1950s. This apathy was present on every campus in the 1950's including men's campuses. Some Smith College women were refusing to let themselves get interested in their classes, but at the same time a number of male students at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and the many other colleges throughout the United States were doing the same thing. An article which appeared in *Time* magazine in 1957 claimed that "no campus is without its

atrocious story of intellectual deadness” and declared “the undergraduate of today is not very much committed to anything, or if *he* is, they are secret commitments [emphasis added]”.¹⁵⁵ Showing disinterest to prevent one from being labelled as ‘unfeminine’ does not serve as an acceptable explanation for this problem as male students would not have had a reason to fear this; it is more likely that a student’s lack of interest was intended to enable them to avoid the shaming moniker of ‘grind’, which was not welcomed by male or female students.

Many co-ed college women showed far more interest in the academic extra-curricular activities that were on offer to them than their male counterparts did. Linda Eisenmann claimed that “Friedan ignored a more positive aspect to student’s more social approach to college life”.¹⁵⁶ She argued that “students supported campus extracurricular activities such as student government, continuing an old tradition of collegiate women working to create and sustain rules of self conduct”.¹⁵⁷ Eisenmann gave as an example the instance when the female students in attendance at the University of Kansas assisted the dean in promulgating rules and adjudicating lapses. This behaviour was not limited to Kansas however. Women in attendance at Oberlin College in the 1950s held all of the top offices in the student government for two years running.¹⁵⁸ Not only were they interested enough to launch a serious and time-consuming campaign for their positions, but they also managed to outdo the men who campaigned, if indeed there were any. A drive for success is not popularly considered to be a particularly ‘feminine’ attribute, but these women chose to run despite this ‘risk’. It is possible that female students were aware, as many are today, that to succeed the job market they would have to be better than their male counterparts, therefore experience in extra-curricular activities was more important to them. To suggest that disinterest in college life was a condition exclusive to women is simply incorrect, but only by omitting from her work the apathy which male students were suffering from at this

time was Friedan able to convincingly suggest that the apathy seen among female students had been caused by the domination of the feminine mystique. Disinterest and laziness was common part of college culture before the 1950s and is a common part of college culture today; a student's lack of interest in their classes or their surroundings should not have been exclusively attributed the feminine mystique, but to a student's environment, teachers and indeed the student herself.

Converse to the national trend, many Smith College students at this time were in fact more likely to place a stigma on students who did not take an interest, rather than labelling as „grinds’ the students took their work more seriously. These students wielded more social power on campus, whereas those who chose not to take an interest in college events and activities were often seen as outcasts and misfits. One occasion in which the balance of power on campus can be seen clearly was when in 1958 the staff of the *Sophian* berated a group of Smith students because they had decided to run for student government but were refusing to campaign. The staff angrily claimed that they had made a mockery of the elections as students had no way of knowing who they were voting for.¹⁵⁹ The staff of the *Sophian*, who were Smith students themselves, showed a great deal of interest both in the workings of the College and the student government. Through this they had come to a position of power at the school paper, which gave them a voice. The student staff members used their power to encourage the rest of the student body to take more of an interest in their surroundings, and to shame those who did not. The balance of power at Smith College lay with the hardworking students, not those whose main interests were dating and men.

The Informed Smith Student

Smith College students showed a great deal of interest not only in their own campus but the world beyond it too. Friedan stated in *The Feminine Mystique* that when students were informed by their professor that “Western civilisation [was] coming to an end” an entire class turned to their notebooks and wrote this down word for word “without even dropping a stitch”.¹⁶⁰ Friedan attempted to demonstrate that the students were so concerned with their (metaphorical) knitting and had so little idea about the state of the world around them that they accepted everything their professor said without challenging his viewpoint, or even pausing to consider if he was correct.

Once again this was not the case for the average Smith student. One student wrote an article for the *Sophian* in December of 1957 in which she suggested that, rather than belittling the Soviet Union’s achievement in sending Sputnik into space, America should celebrate what she believed was the most important scientific achievement in the world’s history and “realise the potential for reconciliation which existed in the already established international community of scientists”.¹⁶¹ To glorify the Soviet Union for its scientific achievements certainly wasn’t a common, or even particularly safe, stance to adopt in America during the Cold War, and therefore the student in question cannot be accused of being incapable of forming her own judgments.

This student did not only voice her opinions, but also attempted to encourage others to challenge their own indoctrinated images of the Soviet Union which had been presented to all Americans throughout the decade. She informed her readers that they “have a liberal arts education, during which we must have been sometime struck by the great humanism of a Russian

novelist or the keen mind of a Russian political figure. It is this kind of experience that we must communicate through the schools, television, movies, literature or any other field we enter into".¹⁶² Not only did the writer assume that all of her readers were intending to pursue a career upon graduation- a good indication of the spirit on the campus - but she also demonstrated a faith in their ability to think for themselves and reject widely acknowledged norms. In the 1950's Smith College students did not just accept their professor's point of view, nor did they care more about their knitting than their society.

The author of this article was not an anomaly on the campus. In the 1950s it was not unusual at Smith College for a student to take such a deep interest in her discipline that she was singled out as an expert in her field while still an undergraduate. Eleanor Foa - a history major in the Class of '59 - was singled out to take part in a television debate run by the *New York Times* entitled "How Can Our Public Opinion Influence Foreign Policy?" She was cited as being especially interested in the nuclear disarmament debate.¹⁶³ Just two months later, another history major from the class of '59, Sherry Fisher, was booked by the World University Service to appear on the radio-television program *College News Conference*. She interviewed Senator Mike Maroney (D), Oklahoma, on the topic of "General Politics: What is the Government Doing?"¹⁶⁴ Neither of these students could be accused of being incapable or unwilling to form their own opinions, nor should it be claimed that they did not pay attention in class as they were clearly at the top of it. In the 1950s Smith College was producing the best and the brightest young adults in America, and this was reflected in the accolades they received. This is further corroborated by the fact that only one week after Fisher appeared on *College News Conference*, Smith announced that yet another student, this time an astronomy major from the Class of '58, Judy Beach (Sigma Xi, Phi Beta Kappa) had been selected as one of only 150 American astronomers who would go

to Moscow for the triennial meeting of the International Astronomical Union that summer.¹⁶⁵ It was not a conference of students, or even just of women, but of professional astronomers- a group among which she had been included. Beach admitted that she was only slightly interested in astronomy before freshman year, but she had allowed herself to become interested in a subject, and had in a short time become one of the leading figures in the field. These are the pursuits Smith students were devoting their time to in the 1950s, not knitting.

The Active Smith Student

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan claimed that “the one lesson a girl could hardly avoid learning, if she went to college between 1945 and 1960, was *not* to get interested, seriously interested, in anything besides getting married and having children”.¹⁶⁶ Friedan suggested that Smith College students had no interests other than their dates and the prospects they might bring; this, of course, was not the case. Students who attended Smith College in the 1950s, on top of succeeding in individual pursuits and taking a deep interest in their studies, also shared a common interest in the national debates which were taking place off the campus. In the late 1950s the USA was experiencing the beginnings of the segregation discussion which exploded in the following decade, and the students on the Smith College campus followed it eagerly.

In just one semester, the school newspaper published eleven stories which discussed the thorny issues of the segregation debate, and all were pro-integration. They discussed the attempts made by African-American children to enrol in the previously racially segregated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and correctly predicted the impact these events would have on the civil rights debate; they discussed the purpose of the NAACP in America; they even

discussed the rising issue of apartheid in South Africa, proving themselves capable of taking an interest not only in national affairs but international ones too.¹⁶⁷ One student wrote a powerful editorial which was intended to raise awareness about the hypocrisy she believed was fuelling the perpetuation of segregation in the US, “our children go to private schools and learn all sorts of interesting things about „other peoples’ ” she stated “but never lay eyes on a member of another race”.¹⁶⁸ This student in particular chose to “let herself get interested” in the segregation debate, and felt so strongly about it that she sought to motivate other students as well. She even went as far as to call her fellow Smith students to arms by encouraging them to use their liberal arts training to educate the rest of the nation to the abhorrence of segregation. This student writer also held the assumption that upon graduation her fellow students would join the career ladder in one field or another, and she attempted to convince her readers that when they did, they must ensure they used their positions to fight injustice. Not only did the writer believe her fellow students were concerned enough to take an interest in her message, but the *Sophian* also had enough faith in readers to make this article the editorial.

The students’ passion for the segregation debate did not end with newspaper articles however. They demonstrated a desire to learn more about the debate than was possible in the classroom by inviting speakers to the campus to teach them about current issues and developments in the civil rights debate (four different speakers visited the campus in just one semester). The speakers included Adam Clayton Powell, a pastor, civil rights activist and democratic congressman for Harlem, New York, whose arrival on campus made the front page of the *Sophian* and was accompanied by the largest photo the newspaper published all year.¹⁶⁹ This sent a clear message about where their allegiances lay. Students also came out in support of the nearby men-only Amherst College when the Theta Xi fraternity received a suspension from

the national chapter for admitting an African American student. Smith students also held anti-segregation protests on campus and even held fundraisers so they could pay to bring black South Africans to America to study medicine, as their race barred them from doing so in their own country.¹⁷⁰

The segregation debate was not the only national news item which the students of Smith College took an avid interest in during the late 1950s; the debate on Nuclear disarmament was also widely discussed, an interest no doubt spurred on by the recent ascent of the Sputnik satellite into orbit above the USA. In a similar fashion to the segregation debate, students voiced their opposition to the arms race. One *Sophian* reporter and Smith College student, Sally Cadbury, attempted to educate her fellow students. In an editorial, published in April of 1958, Cadbury discussed the problems inherent in nuclear testing - she believed that nuclear weaponry could lead nowhere but to war. Cadbury encouraged students to "let their protest be known" to the increase in testing which had occurred. This implies that she expected them not only to be aware of an increase, but to also take a stance on it.¹⁷¹ An anti-bomb student group which had been started at the nearby University of Massachusetts was also advertised in the *Sophian* and Smith students were encouraged to join.¹⁷² Even though the group was started at a co-ed university, it was opened to the female students of Smith College. This once again suggests an assumption made by contemporaries that Smith students were aware enough of the major events of the world both to hold an opinion about them, and to feel strongly enough to want to protest.

Friedan suggested in *The Feminine Mystique* that Smith College students refused to take an interest in anything other than house and home in the 1950s despite the freely available evidence to the contrary. Once again this advocates the theory that she consciously chose to repeat evidence only if it supported the theory she had already created and intended to prove at

all costs. By suggesting that America's youth were incapable of showing an interest in anything other than domestic pursuits, Friedan succeeded in imbuing her work with an urgency that it may otherwise have lacked, but through this she also reduced a dynamic and interesting social group to little more than Stepford wives and obscured from history the work many women undertook in fighting the social injustices of the day, a fight which prepared them for the women's movement in the following decade.¹⁷³

The Scientific Smith Student

Proposals which suggested that women should be encouraged to enter the field of science to both protect national security and support the advancement of the country's scientific ability were heard throughout the decade. Especially during the late 1950s and the early 1960s, colleges, businesses and the US government demonstrated their enthusiasm for women taking a professional interest in the sciences in the hope that they would enter the field upon graduation. This alteration in the traditionally defined „spheres' of work occurred for many reasons, but the most important and influential of these was the onset of the Cold War. It became known in the United States that schools and universities in the Soviet Union placed little emphasis on 'men's' and „women's' work and positively encouraged both sexes to train in science and technology without discrimination. The National Manpower Council announced that there were more than 13,000 female engineering students graduating every year in the Soviet Union, compared to less than a hundred American women who achieved the same qualification annually.¹⁷⁴ This caused a fear among politicians, the academic community and interested citizens that the Soviet Union could, or worse already had, become a more technologically advanced nation than the United

States. Smith College president Benjamin F. Wright voiced his fears for the country in the Smith College Alumnae Quarterly in the Fall of 1956. He believed that “the present state of Russian science and technology is impressive enough. They have begun to catch up with the West. Today, the disturbing question is, are we falling behind in fundamental research and in technological development? Relatively, perhaps absolutely, we seem to be falling behind in the production of mathematicians, scientists and engineers”.¹⁷⁵ Linda Eisenmann argued in *Higher Education for Women in Post-war America* that “[t]he Soviet audacity in launching Sputnik seemed a devastating demonstration of America’s second place status”, but also that the majority of American scientists were not surprised by their achievements.¹⁷⁶ After the launch of Sputnik just one year later, the confirmation that the Soviet Union’s scientists were superior to American scientists caused a more serious call for women to engage in scientific training to be heard throughout the country. The launch of Sputnik resulted in the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) which provided federal aid to Universities for the promotion and advancement of science and technology; in 1958 alone over \$219 million was made available to Universities.¹⁷⁷ Female students were equally encouraged by the NDEA to divert their focus to science and maths as Sputnik’s launch also highlighted a worrying deficiency in the manpower available to work towards America’s advancement in the sciences. At the end of the decade, women trained in science and technology were fast becoming vital to America’s success in the Cold War.

The inclusion of women into the science world helped to protect women from the onset of the ‘feminine mystique’ in many ways. Female students who studied science during the Cold War were more likely to consider their work in college as a preparation for a future career rather than an interesting interlude between high school and marriage. A disproportionately high number of science graduates trained in Russian whilst at college, presumably because many of

the world's leading scientists during this period were from the Soviet Union. It can be assumed that these students at least were preparing to pursue their work in college to a professional level. College students were aware of the impressive rewards— not merely monetary — that were available to students who pursued careers in science and technology.¹⁷⁸ The careers available to them were prestigious, plentiful, high paying and, due to demand, also relatively easy to progress in during the late 1950s, and were therefore very attractive to female college students.¹⁷⁹ The welcoming of women into careers in the science world also helped to break down the definitions of female and male spheres and encouraged businesses to regard them as more acceptable and reliable employees. The jobs made available to women offered them far better prospects than they could hope to receive in traditionally feminine careers and allowed them to serve their country by working outside of the home rather than by raising children from within it.

Towards the end of the 1950s the interest shown by female students in science and maths increased dramatically – at Smith College alone the number of maths majors doubled between 1957 and 1958.¹⁸⁰ By the end of the decade a significant number of undergraduate students were majoring in science at women-only colleges; Smith College had more science majors than art, education or sociology majors- subjects that are traditionally considered to be „feminine’ - and the science department could boast as many honors students as each of these subjects.¹⁸¹ At both Mount Holyoke College and Barnard College one third of the undergraduate population graduated with a degree in science in 1959; only the English department and the history department succeeded in producing a higher number of majors.¹⁸²

Even before the launch of the Sputnik satellite, Smith College had demonstrated a strong history of encouraging students to major in science. Despite the fact that it was a traditionally masculine subject, the faculty was aware that prospects for science graduates were far better than

those available for arts graduates. Smith College was the first women's college in the world to be granted a charter for the establishment of the scientific honor society Sigma Xi.¹⁸³ Each year since the creation of the society the college had selected exceptional Smith College students who excelled in at least *two* sciences and the society's membership had grown steadily on campus as the sciences had continued to increase in popularity. During the 1950s and early 1960s the chapter grew a great deal; when Betty Friedan graduated with the class of 1942, just five Sigma Xi's had graduated alongside her. Fifteen years later however, when- she claimed- women paid less attention to their studies and were more interested by a stove than a Bunsen burner, eighteen Sigma Xi's graduated.¹⁸⁴ This large leap may have been in part due to the increased interest in science which developed after the launch of the Sputnik satellite, but as those graduated in 1958 had begun their senior year before Sputnik had launched, the majority of those involved with the society had joined prior to the event.

The rise in the popularity of science classes and majors at Smith is unsurprising as both of the College's mid-century Presidents firmly supported the acceptance of women into the scientific community and encouraged the students at Smith College to consider graduating as a science major. In an article which appeared in the *New York Times* concerning the usefulness of women to the scientific community Smith College president Thomas C. Mendenhall was quoted as saying he "deplored the lack of women in science".¹⁸⁵ His predecessor, Benjamin F. Wright, felt equally as strongly about women's place in the world of science and technology, during his term in office he worked to improve the science facilities and the level of education provided to Smith College students. In the academic year 1958 to „59, Benjamin Wright instigated a study of Smith College's science department and invited top science professors from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to visit Smith College and assess all aspects of the programs on offer

there. The intention of the study was to ensure the science graduates of Smith College were prepared to compete for jobs on an equal footing with science graduates from other colleges (even men's colleges) and to propose a way to encourage a greater proportion of Smith College's undergraduate population to specialise in some aspect of science, maths or technology at a university level.¹⁸⁶ The results of the study showed that Smith College's science facilities were not even as advanced as those present at local high schools and as a result most prospective students would view Smith College laboratories as a step down from the labs they had become familiar with before entering college. This convinced Wright that new science facilities had to be built on the campus, not only to attract new students with a passion for science, but also to attract current Smith College students to science majors, to give current science majors the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the most up to date equipment and to cement Smith's commitment to producing as many science graduates as possible in the future.¹⁸⁷ Wright made clear his intention to support Smith students who intended to embark upon a career in the field of science and his firm belief that women belonged in the scientific community.

Despite his promotion of the sciences, Wright nonetheless made sure that this was not accomplished at the detriment or expense of arts subjects. He took care to protect Smith College's arts majors from the push towards science, refusing a recommendation made by the MIT professors to increase the number of science classes required from all Smith students (in the hope that it would produce more science majors) as he felt it was unfair to those who had chosen to pursue other interests.¹⁸⁸ He chose instead to blame the college's science teachers for the lack of students majoring in science, insisting that a few interesting required classes would attract far more students to science than many boring ones.¹⁸⁹ His plan was successful as he was able to report increases in registrations for courses in chemistry, mathematics, physics and zoology, and

encouraged the creation of a new astronomy department – a department which traditionally had been weak at Smith College – as part of a joint venture with the other colleges in the Pioneer Valley. The study also revealed that the environment Benjamin Wright had created at Smith College was one which harboured “no antagonism to science students, that no social ostracism of any kind was even conceived of [and] that the area of major was not significant in social groupings at Smith”.¹⁹⁰ Smith College in the 1950s was a college that allowed women interested in science to pursue their interests without fear of reprisal or stigma and supported them in their transition from undergraduate to professional.

There is no doubt that many of the students who attended college in the 1950s did so with the intention of finding a husband and settling down. These women were well represented in *The Feminine Mystique* and their fate is not in dispute. There were many women however who also attended college in the 1950s and early 1960s who did so with the intention of gaining an education and preparing for a career in either a paid or unpaid profession. These women were not represented in *The Feminine Mystique* and have therefore been left out of the history books. Many women in the 1950s were interested in their schoolwork, the world around them and their own future, and at Smith College at least, they were not hampered by their educators. They were offered the opportunity to study subjects not considered beneficial to the running of a household, and especially towards the end of the decade were encouraged to major in science and technology, a path which was intended to take them out of the home and into the labour force so they could work to protect and advance their nation. Women as workers were fast becoming vital to the nation in the 1950s, and this was increasingly reflected in the way they were educated.

Chapter Three

The Opportunities Available to
Female College Graduates in the
1950s

During the 1950s the number of women who worked outside of the home grew by an average of ten percent per year, and by 1960, forty percent of women over the age of sixteen had joined the workforce.¹⁹¹ In twenty years, the percentage of women who left their homes for professional work had doubled from only twenty percent, despite the backlash against working women which had briefly stalled the growth in their share at the end of WWII.¹⁹² By 1962, over half of all the female college graduates in the USA had chosen to go out to work and more than seventy percent of those women with more than five years of college education had elected to join the rat race.¹⁹³ The biggest change occurred among well-educated wives and mothers, both young and old, who had moderate household incomes; by the beginning of the 1960s more than one third of those in the workforce had school-age children waiting for them back at home.¹⁹⁴

The work they entered into cannot be categorised into certain areas as the jobs women undertook during the 1950s and „60s varied not only in type and subject area, but also in skill level, salary and responsibility. As reported by Smith College staff at the time, many students who graduated at the end of the 1950s believed that there were no barriers left to prevent them from entering into whichever career they chose, or from achieving any level of seniority.¹⁹⁵ During this era, many women were eager to challenge the male monopoly of the workplace, spurred on by the negative example set for them by a housebound mother, or the many positive examples set by female college professors, mothers who had exchanged the comfort of the home for the workplace, or indeed a successful daughter who had chosen to pursue the increasingly popular modern trend of combining career and home.

In *The Feminine Mystique* Betty Friedan claimed that in American colleges during the 1950s “even the most able [female students] showed no signs of wanting to be anything more than suburban housewives and mothers” and that fewer and fewer college women were using

their college years to prepare themselves for a future career.¹⁹⁶ She claimed that fewer female students had “distinguish[ed] themselves in a career or profession” than female students who had graduated before the beginning of WWII and she decried the lack of positive role models that were provided to the younger generation throughout their college years.¹⁹⁷ Examination of the college experience demonstrates that this was not the case. The two pursuits – finding a husband and preparing for a career - were no longer mutually exclusive; students were learning that they could have both. Students who attended Smith College in the late 1950s would have found it difficult to avoid thinking about their future career as the college constantly encouraged students to do so, whether it be through college literature, the efforts of the vocational office, or simply the fact that the students were surrounded by successful working women, many of whom were combining careers with marriage. These students were also aware that due not only to the changing attitudes towards women in the workplace, but also the current manpower crisis in the USA, it would be comparatively easy for them to get a job and support themselves upon graduation. There was such a need for workers in the U.S. at this time that many women believed they could serve their country better by gaining a world class education and to using it to help advance the nation rather than by staying home and refusing to take an interest in public affairs. In a country fearful of Soviet advances, this was especially true of any student studying science.

Women were no longer confined exclusively to the sidelines as secretaries and research assistants, although many women still chose to perform these roles as they found it suited their lifestyle better whilst their children were young. Due to the recent influx into the workplace of middle-aged college alumnae whose children had all begun school, recent graduates also became aware that they could pursue a career at a later date, and that they were supported in this endeavour by the staff of Smith College Vocational Office, who gave them the information and

skills they needed to do this. During the late 1950s and the early 1960s, American female college graduates had more choices open to them than ever before, and in some ways even more than those graduating today.

This chapter will shed light on the real opportunities that were open to Smith College graduates, Smith alumnae and students in attendance between 1957 and 1963. This chapter will outline how many of Smith College students either wanted to, or were aware that they would have no choice but to enter the workplace after graduation, and how they were continuously encouraged and supported in their pursuits by College staff, their fellow students and alumnae. It will also examine the changing climate that the students were graduated into and how these changes affected not only their decisions but also their lifestyle and the opportunities they were presented with and of course the jobs and careers that these students actually embarked upon after graduation. Finally this chapter will discuss the reasons why many women still chose to return to the home after the birth of their first child, and briefly examine the support given to Smith College alumnae who had made the decision to return to work after their youngest child began school. The aim of this chapter is to re-examine the conclusions reached by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* about college-educated women, and this will be achieved by re-evaluating the study she conducted on Smith College students and alumnae and by studying other contemporary material available on the subject, including newspaper articles and college statistics, in the hope that the dogma of domesticity created by the success of *The Feminine Mystique* can now be corrected.

College as a Breeding Ground for Career Women

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan identified a new plan for education that she claimed had been infiltrating both high schools and institutions of higher education for several years: Sex-directed education. She informed readers that this method of educating students involved training young women for their roles as housewives whilst discouraging them from pursuing more academic avenues. These avenues, educators believed, would undermine their students' femininity and deny them the opportunity to truly develop as „women'.¹⁹⁸ Friedan claimed that the popularity of sex-directed education had caused even the most dedicated educators of women to abandon their commitment to the advancement of the female mind and exchange it instead for marriage and home classes and lessons in submission. Friedan believed that under the new sex-directors, „exceptional' women were vilified rather than praised, and even the college-level home-economics courses were deemed too academic for America's fairer sex.¹⁹⁹ Exceptional female members of staff were removed from the women's colleges, and replaced, Friedan stated, with a “handsome, husbandly man” who would not distract the girls from their true life purpose.²⁰⁰ She taught her readers that over the course of just a few years, since the end of the Second World War, sex-directed education had succeeded in overturning all of the earlier advancements women had made in higher education. Friedan claimed that “in the 1950s, those who stayed, even the most able, showed no signs of wanting to be anything other than housewife and mother”.²⁰¹

The sex-directed educators did not have as firm a grasp upon American higher education as Friedan would have her readers believe however. Friedan declared in *The Feminine Mystique* that the “disuse of and resistance to higher education by American women”, caused by the influence of the sex-directed educators, “finally began to show... in the departure of male

presidents, scholars and educators in women's colleges".²⁰² Her research here however was incomplete. Friedan conducted her research between 1957 and 1963, and throughout this time the college which steals the focus of her text, Smith College, had a man at the helm; first in the form of Benjamin F. Wright, and second, from 1959, in Thomas C. Mendenhall. Neither was Smith the only women's college to employ a male president during this period as fellow Seven Sisters colleges Radcliffe College and Mount Holyoke College were both headed by men at this time; upon the departure of Roswell G. Ham in 1957, Mount Holyoke likewise were 'able' to replace their president with a male scholar, Richard Glenn Gettel. Three of the top seven women's colleges in the country had male presidents during the 1950s, and the colleges showed no difficulty in replacing those who chose to leave. Male educators were not renouncing education for women.

As one probes further into the text, it becomes clear that Friedan was unsure herself of what effect, if any, the sex-directed educators had had on higher education in the USA. Just a few pages after Friedan declared that the departure of male presidents was evidence of the infiltration of the sex-directed educators, she claimed that it had also caused the female professor to depart women's colleges, as they were being denied the office of presidency; instead they chose to "head a department in a great university where the PhD's were safely men".²⁰³ Sex-directed education, she argued, was able to take hold of American Universities because men *were* being hired as presidents of women's colleges. The first inconsistency in Friedan's logic is that if the sex-directed educators really did control the universities during this period and educators believed that women could not manage the office of the president, then neither would they have been hired to teach at the highest level in a men's college, especially as there was apparently a surplus of male educators who had recently left their positions teaching women. The

second incongruence with her argument is that at many women's colleges, women were not being denied the office of the president at all. Barnard, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr and Vassar all had female presidents, and Katherine McBride of Bryn Mawr and Sarah Gibson Blanding of Vassar had been in office since the Second World War (McBride would remain until 1970, the longest running president in Bryn Mawr history). In 1960, Radcliffe College made the decision to hire a renowned women's education reformer and advocate, Mary Bunting, to the office of the president, replacing male president Wilbur Kitchener Jordan. Bunting's opinions about women's education closely resembled Friedan's, and she later even pioneered a training scheme for past alumnae who wanted to return to work.²⁰⁴ If sex-direction had influenced American women's education, it did not succeed in reaching the dizzying heights of the Seven Sisters colleges. Friedan altered her arguments to prove the point she wanted to make and in doing so she not only failed to present an historically accurate picture of the administration of women's colleges in the 1950s, but actually succeeded in presenting two inaccurate ones.

Betty Friedan declared in *The Feminine Mystique* that this new method of educating young women was not confined to one specific college, type of college or geographic area, but had in fact been adopted as standard in all of the colleges and universities, even the "proudest bastions of the women's Ivy League, the colleges which pioneered higher education for women in America and were noted for their uncompromising intellectual standards".²⁰⁵ No doubt she included her own alma mater in this description. At Smith College however, both academic staff and support staff were focused on preparing their students for a career after graduation, and this description did not include a career in the home. Students themselves worked hard to ready

themselves to enter the job market upon completion of their four years of study, and sought to support their fellow classmates in doing so too.

If the applicant was bright enough, and lucky enough, to win a place at Smith College in the late 1950s she was sent a college handbook from the dean of her class before she arrived on campus. This handbook was designed to outline to the new student the different aspects of life at Smith College. It detailed the sorts of clothes that were popular at Smith (Bermuda shorts for classes, “no more than two inches above the knee, please”, long coats if they were going down to State Street, skirts for dinner), the house and college rules the students would be expected to abide by and, most importantly, why an education from a liberal arts college would benefit them in their future lives. This „mission statement’, written by the Dean of the Class, informed the readers that “Smith offers a wealth of opportunity both in and out of the classroom to further interests or to create new ones. Whether you become a scientist or philosopher, linguist or a master of the fine arts, you will find that the liberal arts education will give you a firm base not only for your special field of endeavour, but for the better understanding of the problem confronting our community, our country and the world today”.²⁰⁶ This address, written specifically for the class of 1958 (the class which Betty Friedan would interview four years later) clearly shows not only that Smith professors believed in teaching their students more than just marriage preparation classes, but that they also intended for students to use their education after their time at Smith had ended. The handbook was intended both to make the new student aware of the magnitude of what she would learn and encounter at Smith College and of how it was her duty upon completion to use her education for the good of her country. The handbook made it clear to the new students that this was not to be achieved by staying home and raising her children, but by helping to advance the nation as a scientist, philosopher, linguist or artist. Betty

Friedan was right when she asserted that students were being made aware of their purpose in life before they even reached the campus, but she was wrong about what the purpose was.

During her time at Smith College, the new student was continually encouraged to plan ahead and aim for a career. Students were given opportunities to expand their horizons and explore different ways of life to those experienced previously. One of the most exciting opportunities offered to students at Smith College in the 1950s was the chance to spend their junior year in a European country. This was offered primarily for the benefit of language majors, but the program also offered students the chance to study in Geneva for one year. This trip did not require students to have any level of proficiency in a language and was instead designed to further their interest in international studies. Students majoring in a range of subjects, including history, government and politics, economics and sociology were encouraged to take part.

Studying abroad required students to be separate from their loved ones for a full year, and this included any beaus they might have had at neighbouring men's colleges. To remove young women from "the world's greatest marriage mart" was not compatible with the aims of the sex-directed education which Betty Friedan claimed was so influential. That the year abroad was so popular with both teachers and students alike despite this fact suggests that the students who attended Smith College in the late 1950s were preparing for more than just marriage and motherhood. Students were willing to put their love lives on hold for the sake of their education, and their educators encouraged it.

Students of Smith College in the 1950s and early ,60s were provided with a wealth of positive role models for them to emulate, from their college professors to their own mothers, aunts and older sisters. These role-models served as a constant reminder to the students of the high standards which college-educated women were capable of reaching through hard work and

dedication. Smith College was headed by a man, and would remain as such until 1975, but as the Seven Sisters Colleges worked so closely together students in attendance at Smith College in the 1950s would have been aware that four of the seven top women's colleges in the country were headed by female presidents, and that all of these women fervently supported careers for women. This gave them a working demonstration of the heights a woman could reach in the professional world if she wanted to.

Within the walls of their own college however, Smith students were not short of women they could look up to and model themselves upon. During this period women in the senior rank of the Smith College faculty far outnumbered the men, and throughout the 1950's significantly more women than men had been promoted to the position of head of department or „full' professor.²⁰⁷ Women did not only succeed in traditionally feminine subjects at Smith College either; the departments which boasted female heads during this time included physics, economics, geography, and Russian language to name just a few. The advisor for the honors programme, the program which encouraged the cream of Smith College's student body to devote even more time and effort to their studies, was female; even the advisor to arguably the most „masculine' program, pre-med, was female. Women were employed in some capacity - be that assistant professor, associate professor or instructor- in almost every academic department in the college, no subject was „off limits'. This was not a new phenomenon either, as of the fifty-one professor emeritus' recognised by Smith in 1957, thirty-eight were female, showing that the college faculty had been populated with women for a significant length of time.²⁰⁸

Many of these female professors and instructors - the women Betty Friedan had labelled as „exceptional' - were also married with children. On a daily basis Smith's female faculty gave their students living proof that it was possible to have both a career and a family; that they did

not have to choose. Students who attended Smith College during this period were constantly exposed to intelligent, successful career women, women who taught them atomic physics and intro to quantum mechanics, yet still managed to raise their children. The „average’ woman a Smith student came into contact with during her time at college had a husband, at least one degree, more likely two or three, and a full time position working in a prestigious college. For these students, the „exception’ was the woman who had chosen not use her education to enter the workplace.

One of the most obvious ways in which women who attended Smith College in the late 1950s and early 1960s were prepared for a career outside of the home upon graduation, which was not discussed by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, was the dedicated work of the campus’ vocational office. Run by Smith College alumna Alice Norma Davis, the vocational office worked closely with the president, faculty and the students to encourage and enable students to enter the workplace after graduation. The Vocational Office attempted to prevent the panic felt by seniors as graduation grew nearer by making them aware long beforehand of the possibilities open to them if they focused their attention to their studies.²⁰⁹ The office organised speakers to visit the campus to enlighten the students to the opportunities which awaited a hard-working graduate after college. These speakers did not confine themselves to discussing feminine careers - jobs within the science sector were often a hot topic.²¹⁰ The details of these talks were always covered by the College paper, the *Sophian*, which enabled the speaker’s message to reach an even wider proportion of seniors and began preparing interested juniors, sophomores and even freshman for a life outside of the home.

The vocational office also supported the large number of students who chose to work over the summer vacation. Companies advertised summer positions through the vocational

office, which enabled students to see the wide range of opportunities available to them. These jobs included standard student summer jobs such as camp counselor, waitress and working for national parks, but the jobs advertised to the Smith students also included a number of far more obscure and unusual opportunities such as work on a steamship, at a dude ranch or for an overseas travel agency.²¹¹ The vocational office also advertised career trainee opportunities, which allowed students to obtain a better understanding of the career they were interested in, and summer study awards, which helped to finance students who wanted to spend the summer researching a particular aspect of their work either in America or abroad.²¹² In 1958 the office began promoting summer internships for students who wanted to build up a relationship with a particular company in the hope that they would then hire them after graduation. In the first year, positions were advertised in hundreds of firms, covering more than 40 different fields, including business, industry, government, science, recreation and education.²¹³ Students themselves were able, with the help of the vocational office, to begin to take control of their own futures whilst still in college and experience for themselves what the life of a career woman could be like.

The staff at the vocational office not only helped the students to find jobs after graduation, but also worked with businesses, both in nearby Boston and New York and further afield to support them in locating suitable graduates to fill their available positions. It was not uncommon for prospective employers, often from prestigious companies such as IBM or Doubleday, to visit the campus and interview interested students there and then, which meant that a large proportion of Smith seniors in the 1950s had secured positions before they had even graduated.²¹⁴ The work of the Vocational Office was often so successful, especially in regards to jobs in the science sector, that as graduation drew nearer Davis regularly needed to discourage

prospective employers from visiting the campus as there were so few unemployed seniors left she believed it was not worth their while.²¹⁵

A New Climate: The Need for Womanpower

Students who graduated from college in the 1950s and early „60s would not have found it difficult to find a job if they wanted one, and this was as true for female students as it was for male. By the end of the 1950s the demand for workers had grown to previously unimagined proportions; almost every sector of the American economy found that jobs could not be filled as quickly as they were being created, and in many fields the need was so great that special measures had to be taken. This included hiring women to positions they would not have been considered for even five years earlier. In 1957 the National Manpower Council recognised that “women constitute[d] not only an essential but also a distinctive part of our manpower resources”; the demand for manpower began to override long held prejudices about a woman’s place.²¹⁶

During the Second World War women had proven their capability of holding down a job outside of the home, but with the return of the troops in 1945 the need abated and many of these pioneering women returned to the traditional role of housewife and mother. Shortly afterwards however, the shortage of manpower, especially in the areas of science and technology, was highlighted once again, this time by the onset of the Korean War, and the debate about the need for womanpower began to return to the American workplace.²¹⁷ By the end of the decade, the situation had only worsened, forcing Americans everywhere to accept that career women were no longer exceptional, they were necessary. The need for women quickened the removal of many of the barriers which had previously discouraged or prevented women from entering the

workplace, such as the absence of career progression and the lack of responsibility in the jobs they were offered.²¹⁸

At this time the government needed extra manpower for the Civil Service so badly that the decision was made to allow juniors as well as seniors sit the entrance exam.²¹⁹ The positions being recruited for also included the potential for career progression and the chance to become a manager in the future, signalling a change for female college students.²²⁰ The civil service was not recruiting women for roles on the sidelines, but instead intended for them to become an integral part of their organisation. Female students were made aware of their importance to the workplace, and the opportunities that came with this, at younger and younger ages, giving women a greater freedom than ever before to choose and prepare for the career they wanted. The definition of „feminine‘ and „masculine‘ spheres had begun to blur, which meant that by the time the seniors who had been interviewed by Betty Friedan for *The Feminine Mystique* had graduated, the workplace was a far more appealing place even than it had been even for wartime graduates such as Friedan and her peers.

One area of employment which was in desperate need of both man and womanpower in the late 1950s and early ‚60s was the teaching profession, and this need played a large part in encouraging many young women both to attend graduate school and to enter the workplace afterwards. Students at Smith College were not able to avoid the discussions about America’s need for teachers while on campus as it was prevalent both in the national news and in the College paper.²²¹ It is likely that this widespread coverage of the national shortage was designed to persuade female college graduates that it was their duty to answer their nation’s call in its hour of need, and many did. Yale University designed a masters degree in teaching specifically for students of Smith College, which allowed them to complete their senior year at Yale instead of

Smith (their degree was still conferred by their home institution) whilst simultaneously taking graduate level classes in education.²²² Students then completed a one year master's course instead of the traditional two year course. The program not only enabled newly qualified teachers to reach the classroom a full year earlier than would normally have been possible, it also allowed female students to take undergraduate classes at a University which otherwise would have been closed to them. The introduction of this new program allowed many more women to choose to work towards a career rather than become a housewife after marriage, and gave each a better resume to fall back on in later life.

One area which women found themselves being recruited to was work of national importance, and this included jobs in the army, navy and air force. The army offered students, male or female, the chance to begin work straight after graduation in an executive position; for both men and women who graduated in the 1950s, the chance to start work from the position of executive was a far better offer than most would have found elsewhere. The recruitment adverts printed in college papers took pains to make the armed forces seem glamorous to students, whilst being professional at the same time, in the hope of persuading more women to consider joining up. One advert for the US Air Force, printed in the *Sophian* in 1958, featured three pictures in a row; the first a smartly dressed woman working at a desk, the second a young woman wandering the streets of Paris, the third, a woman in a US Air Force uniform. The tagline read "for the woman of executive ability: a challenging job and worldwide travel as an officer in the United States Air Force".²²³ This position offered college graduates the chance to travel and the opportunity to work in a challenging environment, whilst also holding a respected position of authority, something that could not be offered in a traditionally feminine role. The opportunities offered to women as a result of the manpower crisis gave women the chance to experience an

independence few women could have boasted even during the Second World War, further making the workplace a more attractive place for a woman than ever before.

The opportunities offered to women by the Armed-Forces were excellent, but even these could not compare to what women willing to train for work in the areas of science and technology during the 1950s could expect. As the vocational office made clear to students in their articles and campus talks during this period, the opportunities opening up to female science graduates were vast and they could expect to earn large salaries immediately after graduation. Alice Norma Davis claimed that “the scientifically trained Smith graduate of today can look at the employment world as her oyster. The opportunities are many and varied, and the beginning salaries may well stagger her parents”.²²⁴ Davis declared in 1956 that the climate for women in the field of science had changed and that businesses were not only more willing to hire a woman scientist, they were also now willing to train her. Davis had good reason for making these claims, as over the course of the previous ten years, the number of positions for science graduates which had been referred to her office had increased year on year, and by 1956 the number was more than double what it had been at the end of the war. The types of positions being referred had changed too; Davis observed that the jobs she was currently recruiting for were “more responsible, have greater career possibilities and are generally more vital to the overall functioning of the organisation”.²²⁵ Women were now being considered for a career in science rather than just hired to a job. Science was still a man’s world, but by the late 1950s, it was becoming far more appealing to women.

Opinions about a Smith College graduate’s place within American Society changed quickly in the late 1950s and this change is demonstrated by the differences between two commencement speeches delivered to the college. Both speeches were delivered to graduating

classes at Smith College but sent quite differing messages to the respective audiences. The first, delivered in 1955 by politician and democratic presidential candidate for 1952 and 1956, Adlai Stevenson, is a well known speech and is often reproduced by historians as evidence that women were being forced into the home in the 1950s. It was analysed by Friedan herself in *The Feminine Mystique*, which may account for some of the speech's fame. Friedan claimed that Stevenson's speech "dismissed the desire of educated women to play their own political part in the 'crisis of the age'" and encouraged listeners to involve themselves in the world only in their roles as wives and mothers.²²⁶ Stevenson's commencement address was also discussed by William H. Chafe in *The American Woman* and by Sara Evans in her 1989 survey of women's history *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*; Evans claimed that Stevenson's "exhortations to women to take up the banner of republican motherhood... only re-emphasised the isolation of the housewife".²²⁷ Both Friedan and Evans' judgements of Stevenson's address are correct.

Stevenson began his speech by outlining to the female graduates of Smith College's Class of '55 the problems he expected America to face in the coming years and what resources the government would need to deal with such issues. Only after this did he begin to include his audience in his plan "and here's where you come in".²²⁸ The graduates' role, as far as Adlai Stevenson was concerned, was to marry, if they had not done so already, and to provide a stable, happy home for their husband, thereby enabling him to go out and save the country from the threat of communism.²²⁹ In addition to running the home, Stevenson "challenged" his audience with the task of keeping their husbands "Western", "truly purposeful" and "whole".²³⁰

Stevenson explained to his captive listeners that the work he suggested was perfectly suited to them as they could perform it "with a baby on your lap, or in the kitchen with a can

opener in your hand”; the height of their „career’ would be reached, he persisted, when they could “even practise their saving arts on that unsuspecting man while he’s watching television” – if they could save a man without actually having to interfere with his day, then they had reached their full potential.²³¹

Adlai Stevenson made the role he offered to Smith College graduates sound even more significant by suggesting that not every woman was capable of performing the task he had asked of them. He was aware that some women were dissatisfied with their role as housewife and bored at being trapped within the confines of their own home, but argued that those who were not satisfied in their role as housewife and mother had failed in their duty to their country and simply did not understand how lucky they were. In Africa, they were informed, female labour and polygamy remained the dominant system. Stevenson made it clear both that the presence of working women signposted an underdeveloped society and that career women and happy marriage could not be mixed.²³² By pursuing a career, he warned, graduates not only undermined America’s status as a free and advanced society, but also jeopardised their own chances at happiness.

Stevenson acknowledged that at some point in their lives his audience may find themselves feeling “far apart from the great issues and stirring debates for which their education has given them understanding and relish” as “once they wrote poetry. Now it is the laundry list. Once they discussed art and philosophy until late in the night. Now they are so tired they fall asleep as soon as the dishes are finished”.²³³ He argued however that rather than wasting their education, these women should be using that vital resource to stimulate their husbands and educate their sons; this, Stevenson attempted to persuade his audience, would stave off both

boredom and dissatisfaction. Failing that, he knew of plenty of outside activities that women could involve themselves in, providing their primary occupation remained as homemaker.

It is little wonder that this speech, delivered at Friedan's alma mater, was discussed and derided by her in *The Feminine Mystique*; Friedan claimed that in his speech Stevenson "dismissed the desire of educated women to play their own political part in the 'crisis of the age'".²³⁴ Adlai Stevenson's opinion of a woman's place outlined the 'feminine mystique' well and failed to recognise both that woman as well as men could prove useful to America as workers and that women were entitled to pursue a career if they chose to. That Friedan's assessment of Stevenson's commencement speech was accurate does not mean however that her interpretation of what it represented was correct. Adlai Stevenson discussed his own personal views on a woman's place in his speech; his opinions did not necessarily represent the views of the US government, the Democratic Party or even Smith College itself. Friedan however held his address up as evidence that college students everywhere were being denied entrance to the workplace and were being forced into the role of homemaker for the sake of the country. She claimed that

"the logic of the feminine mystique redefined the very nature of woman's problem. When woman was seen as a human being of limitless potential, equal to man, anything that kept her from realizing her full potential was a problem to be solved... but now that woman is seen only in terms of her sexual role, the barriers to the realization of her full potential, the prejudices which deny her full participation in the world are no longer problems. The only problems now are those that might disturb her adjustment as a housewife".²³⁵

Friedan failed to discuss the other commencement addresses delivered to graduating classes both at different colleges during 1955 and at Smith College itself in earlier or later years, or to analyse the message delivered in these alternative speeches. In doing so she created an unbalanced image of the advice bestowed upon female graduating seniors during the 1950s.

The most notable of such other commencement addresses was delivered by John F. Kennedy in 1958. Kennedy's address offered a very different message to the graduating seniors of the Class of 1958. Like Stevenson, Kennedy's address focused on the state of the country and threats it faced from the Soviet Union and Communism; the strategy he had conceived to deal with the problems could not have been more different however. Kennedy began his address with an statement which conveyed his recognition that many of his listeners would shortly be entering the workplace and therefore his lack of prejudice against the working woman; "[i]n the midst of all the pleas, plans and pressures that urge a career upon this year's graduates, few, I dare say, if any, will be urging upon you a career in the field of politics".²³⁶ His acknowledgement that the graduates were to become career women did not focus on how unusual it was for women to pursue careers, nor was it a commendation for their perseverance with the „cause'. It is instead recognition that it was normal for a college graduate, male or female, to begin a career after graduation, and of course Kennedy was right in his assumption as the majority of his audience were preparing themselves to begin jobs they had already secured.²³⁷

Kennedy proceeded to explain to his audience the importance of using their liberal arts education to support the country, not by supporting husbands in their endeavours outside of the home, but by pursuing careers in socially useful professions. Kennedy's recognition that the majority of his listeners were already preparing to enter the workplace is apparent as, rather than attempting to persuade the graduates to pursue careers instead of becoming wives and mothers, Kennedy attempted to convince them that the education bestowed upon them left them with an obligation to use their career to serve their country instead of to earn money, "this is a great institution of learning, Smith College. Its establishment and continued functioning, like that of all great colleges and universities, have required considerable effort and expenditure. I cannot

believe that all of this was undertaken merely to give the school's graduates an economic advantage in the life's struggle".²³⁸ The message which John F. Kennedy delivered to the graduating class of 1958 was that they had a civic responsibility to use their education to advance the country, whether that be through politics, science, teaching or another field entirely. Kennedy explained to the students that their country was not only relying on their male counterparts but on them as well to defeat the Soviet Union and to ensure America's bright future. In direct opposition to Adlai Stevenson's opinion, Kennedy recognised that women's work was vital to the nation.

After Kennedy was elected to office in 1960 he created the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), a committee which studied women's rights and ability to enter the workplace on a large scale. The commission's report was also published in 1963, shortly after *The Feminine Mystique*, and Alice Davis, the head of Smith College's vocational office, believed this report was even more influential in encouraging mature women to re-enter the workplace than *The Feminine Mystique*.²³⁹ By ignoring Kennedy's address to the women of Smith College's class of 1958, Friedan ignored the beginnings of governmental support of career women, something which would later prove useful to the women's movement.

The Career Paths Taken by the Smith College Graduates

In his seminal work *The American Woman*, William H. Chafe claimed that "the most striking feature of the 1950s was the degree to which women continued to enter the job market and expand their sphere". Chafe also informed his readers that "the pace of female employment quickened rather than slowed during the post-war years".²⁴⁰ In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty

Friedan expressed worry that women were returning to the home after college to become housewives and mothers and were not attempting to enter the job market at all. She claimed that “the feminine mystique permits, even encourages, women to ignore the question of their identity. The feminine mystique says they can answer the question „who am I’ by saying „Tom’s wife... Mary’s mother’”.²⁴¹ Chafe’s assessment of the period however is much closer to the truth. By the end of the decade, forty percent of all women over the age of sixteen were in work; by 1962, a year before the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, over fifty-three percent of female college graduates were already in the workplace, a significantly higher proportion than women who had not received a college education.²⁴² During the 1950s, a college educated woman had more options open to her than ever before, and many chose to take full advantage of them.

Throughout the decade, as women became more aware of the opportunities available to them outside of the home, and how marriage could hold them back, it became more common for some female students to reject offers of marriage and instead enter the workplace as a single woman.²⁴³ Betty Friedan was aware of this fact as she interviewed several students who either had experience of doing just this or knew someone who had, although these interviews were not published in *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan interviewed several female college students who had won *Mademoiselle*’s competition, which offered a group of lucky college students the chance to learn about the world of journalism through a six-week summer internship in New York City. The majority of the students had already decided that they would not marry straight after graduation as the internship had shown them a world apart from college and marriage. One woman informed Friedan that “most of us were talking last night, we’ve had so much fun since we’ve been here, met so many interesting people. The idea of getting married now is unthinkable. I don’t think we’ll get married until we meet someone we really want to marry, not

just to get married”.²⁴⁴ The majority of the students who were interviewed by Friedan had plans to train for a career after college; one student intended to become a journalist, two had been accepted to graduate school and many more planned to become teachers or writers.²⁴⁵

Few of these students planned to work after graduation, but they form a poor selection as, as they had all won *Mademoiselle*’s prestigious nationwide competition, they represented the very best of America’s female college students, but very few of the winners interviewed knew of many of their contemporaries who had no plans to work after graduation either, even if they were getting married. A student stated that “as far as a career goes, I’d like to teach English. I’m going to graduate school if I can dig up the money. Just decided, end of junior year. My roommate has always planned on being an anthropologist, she’s gone straight through. Some of my friends don’t know what they wanted to do, they have vague plans, graduate school, or go to Europe. Of my six friends, I can only think of one who will be married [in] the next two years, and she wants to go on to graduate school”.²⁴⁶ Another of *Mademoiselle*’s lucky winners told Friedan that “In my sorority house, nineteen out of twenty-five girls ...are going to get married this summer, but they’re prepared to go out and help make a living”.²⁴⁷

At Smith the proportion of graduates who entered the job market was slightly higher than the national average. In 1958 four-hundred and ninety women graduated from Smith; by October 1958 twenty-four had already married and chosen not to look for work, one-hundred and five women remained unemployed (for varying reasons), three were travelling and two were working in volunteer roles.²⁴⁸ This meant that an impressive seventy-three percent of the class of 1958 had entered the workplace upon graduation, and this number included fifty-eight married graduates, more than double the number of married graduates who had chosen not to look for work.

Friedan's conclusion that college students did not intend to work after graduation is also not corroborated by the statistics collated by Barnard College about their graduates. In 1956 for example, forty-six percent of graduates from Barnard College entered the workforce and thirty-two percent began graduate work.²⁴⁹ The remaining twenty-two percent of graduates were either travelling, homemaking or unaccounted for. Even if it is assumed that all those who were unaccounted for were married, and those travelling were following husbands to new jobs, the number of Barnard graduates who returned to the home directly after college is still only one in five. A far larger proportion of college graduates were prepared to enter the workforce than Friedan represented in *The Feminine Mystique*.

Smith's class of '58 entered into careers in an impressively wide range of industries, demonstrating the large number of businesses which had come to appreciate the value of a college woman as well as a college man by the end of the 1950s. Smith College graduates in 1958 began careers in advertising, editing, market research, art, architecture, banking, insurance, finance, general business (including personnel, public relations, and educational or medical institutions) government, city planning, international affairs, modelling, museums, libraries, music, radio and television, retail, science, social work, group work, psychology, teaching and graduate study (including six graduates in medical school at either Yale or Harvard and one student in business school).²⁵⁰ There were few careers by the end of the decade which were still closed to the female graduate, and the broad selection of careers upon which Smith's class of '58 embarked is a testament to this.

That the students who did enter the workforce were just there to bide their time until someone proposed or to pay their husband's way through school was also an erroneous statement. The *Barnard Bulletin*, Barnard College's student paper, advertised graduate jobs for

the senior class, and in just one month the job opportunities published by the Bulletin included a number of posts for systems service representatives with IBM, a Saks 5th Avenue executive training program, a position as a case worker for the department of family and child welfare, several positions for organic and biochemists with the Schering Corporation and a part time internship at the Mount Holyoke News Bureau that was intended to be combined with graduate study.²⁵¹ These jobs were advertised in a women's college magazine, proving the jobs were intentionally offered to women, not just open to them, and the positions advertised were high paying and prestigious. There would have been little purpose in hiring women who were planning to leave within a short period of time; the students who were hired would not have been expected to marry straightway, or give up their career if they did. This advertisement does not support Friedan's theories that college was just a preparation for marriage or that professional life after college was not an option for women in the 1950s.

A study conducted by the University of Michigan also found that less than half of college women cited money as their incentive for entering the workplace.²⁵² These women were not pursuing careers just 'to get hubby through college' as Friedan claimed in *The Feminine Mystique*.²⁵³ Neither an interest in the scientific world nor the desire to be self-supporting concurs with Friedan's description of a female college student under the spell of the feminine mystique, yet both attributes were promoted in women's colleges during this period. Not only were female students encouraged to pursue a full-time career after college in the 1950s, they were often encouraged to pursue one in a traditionally male sphere and to view it as a long-term commitment.

The Choice:

Why Many Chose to Return to the Home & Why Others Chose to Leave It.

Despite having made strong gains in the workplace and succeeding in being welcomed into a far wider selection of careers than ever before, two thirds of working women still chose to give up their jobs after the birth of their first child. For some women this „choice’ was forced upon them, but many made the decision themselves, often while still in college. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan acknowledged this trend by claiming that “women who had once wanted careers were now making careers out of having babies”.²⁵⁴ Friedan blamed the pregnant woman’s inclination to resign on outside pressures upon her and the indoctrination both in school and by the media which had caused women to value femininity over outside achievement.

Friedan however failed to recognise the difference between her own generation’s decisions and those made by the current generation. Friedan’s contemporaries, if they had not done so beforehand, had returned to the home upon the birth of their first child. The college graduates from the late 1950s and afterwards however gave up only their current jobs when their first child was born, not the careers they had worked so hard to attain. Before they had even begun their working lives, many of these students had already made the decision to leave their positions to raise their children while they were young, but more importantly, they had also *already* decided that they would return to work afterwards; most expected to do so after their youngest child started school.

American sociologist and educator, David Riesman, claimed in 1964 that “there is much less resignation and inhibition among women [today than in my mother’s generation]... instead there is an effort to lead a multi-dimensional life”.²⁵⁵ Even a woman who wrote to

Friedan to thank her for writing *The Feminine Mystique* informed her that “my children grew up in the mystique jungle, but somehow escaped it”.²⁵⁶ One student whom Friedan interviewed about her plans after college told her that “most girls, including myself, don’t intend to pursue the career thing beyond a few years after getting married. After I have children I’ll give a career a leave of absence. Of course, my mother never went back. I’d like something I could go back to”.²⁵⁷ This generation chose to give up their jobs to raise their children, and then chose return to their careers once their children were in school.

One explanation for the difference between the two generations is that one had grown up with the other, and had learned from their mistakes. The majority of college students in the 1950s were aware long before the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* that college educated women who had chosen not to enter the workplace after graduation, or who had relinquished their careers after marriage or childbirth, often became bored, unfulfilled and depressed in their role as housewife and mother, because these women were their own mothers. One female student remarked in an interview with Betty Friedan that she intended never to end up like her mother as “whenever it looked as if she would have to get a job, we never could think of anything she could do but cook. She’s very gentle, we couldn’t bear the thought of her in the world of business”.²⁵⁸ The student did not say that her mother was unhappy in her role as homemaker, just that she could not be financially useful to the family as a whole, but this was incentive enough for the student to divert her own life onto a different path. Many other students had grown up with mothers who worked outside of the house and therefore did not attach a stigma to mothers who worked. Chafe argued that during the 1950s “almost half the adolescent girls were growing up with examples in their own home of women who combined outside employment with marriage. To be sure, very few of these women occupied positions which could be described as

executive, but they did have interests outside of the home, and clearly contradicted the image of the captive housewife”.²⁵⁹ For these students, working outside of the home in later life would have been more ordinary than to remain in the role of housewife.

At this time, the students at Smith College would have been aware not only of their own mothers’ attempts to re-enter the workplace (if they had done or were doing so) but also of the nationwide increase in working mothers. In the 1950s returning to the workplace was a growing trend among mothers both young and old; as William H. Chafe recognised in *The American Woman*, the largest growth in the female labour force in the 1950s took place among well-educated wives from middle-class families.²⁶⁰ College-educated women in this demographic had become a sought after commodity in both in industry and the professions as they only needed re-training, rather than a full education. Due to their number they formed a fantastic national resource for a country which was short on manpower. Mothers were especially encouraged to retrain as teachers, particularly maths teachers, and nurses. This caused many of them to return to a college campus for classes, and therefore gave current students a glimpse of their own future.

Women who were attempting to retrain for the workplace had a strong presence on the campus of Smith College towards the end of the 1950s and the early 1960s, as Smith President Benjamin Wright had made a commitment to all past Smith graduates promising to attempt to help them retrain for the workplace; he felt that Smith College had “a real responsibility” to care for both Smith alumnae and alumnae of other colleges living in the vicinity of Northampton if they requested assistance in preparing to work outside of the home.²⁶¹ In 1958, a five day conference about work and married women was held on the Smith College campus for alumnae and their families. The conference was intended both to help Smith College graduates return to

work and to help their families learn to adjust to the change. A few years later, in 1962, the Seven College Conference, an alliance of the seven women's colleges in the north east of the USA, sponsored an eight session course to guide women with college degrees to re-entering the labour market.²⁶²

Smith College was so inundated with requests for support from alumnae and former Smith students who had never graduated, and the national need for teachers was so great, that in conjunction with the vocational office and the graduate school, a study was carried out in order to determine the number of persons within the community who were interested in returning to the teaching profession. It was proposed that Smith should create a graduate school program specifically tailored to housewives who had children.²⁶³ The staff of the vocational office, especially Davis, were well aware of the need for support for older women who wanted to return to work after many years as a housewife, and of the difficulties these women often faced. Davis described the situation in a report sent to Benjamin Wright, stating that she believed it had been caused more “by some women themselves who feel that they are frustrated, deprived of their privileges, failing to make their true contribution if they are relegated to the role of wife and mother” than by “the needs of our economy”.²⁶⁴ Alice Davis even set up an alliance with the Alumni Advisory Center in New York City so she could offer support to the wide number of Smith graduates she had heard from who were keen to go back to work, but who did not live close enough for her to help them personally. Through this alliance the vocational office received further professional support which helped them to improve the service they offered both to Alumnae and current students.²⁶⁵

For the Smith College students of the 1950s, the process of preparing for both their careers and their career break simultaneously whilst still in college was made considerably easier

by the presence of Smith College alumnae on campus as the vocational office was able to use their newfound knowledge and understanding to help current students who had already planned to give up work after the birth of their first child. Alice Davis believed that with the right support, the current generation really could have it all; a career, a family, and the chance to raise their own children without sacrificing their work outside of the home. In a discussion she had with Betty Friedan when Friedan visited the campus in 1958, Davis stated that in her opinion what Friedan referred to as the „feminine mystique’ was

“much more true of [the older generation] than the present generation. What they did after graduation from college had nothing of career value. They can only do clerical things of no value. This is a group that needs retraining more than the current generation will, [current students] are getting jobs of responsibility. And we are working with them to get jobs they’ll be able to return to, and get skills now they can use when they go back. High interest in teaching, this is obviously something they can return to”.²⁶⁶

With the support from the vocational office and their firsthand experience of how the feminine mystique had affected their own families and those around them, the Smith students who graduated in the late 1950s understood the choices which lay ahead of them and were able to plan accordingly. Many worked throughout their children’s childhood, but those who wanted to stay home while their children were young were given the tools to do this successfully, and to make their later transition into work as smooth as possible.

Betty Friedan suggested in *The Feminine Mystique* that women needed a career to be happy, but she failed to recognise that the majority of women, whilst they did not want to spend the rest of their lives as a homemaker, wanted the opportunity to raise their own children as well. Friedan claimed in an earlier article that she had written for the Smith College Alumnae magazine, that she “knew” the Smith student of the day and understood what she wanted out of life. Friedan proclaimed that “we are who you want to be – executive wives chauffeuring station wagons full of children through suburbia. We spend most of our time at home (eight rooms,

colonial to contemporary) with husbands and 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 children. We've lived through all the possible frustrations education can cause housewives. And the problems we've had working out our role as women make us regret only one thing today, that we did not work harder in college!!!²⁶⁷ Friedan did not understand, or refused to recognise, that the majority of undergraduates at Smith College were working hard as they already understood the value of their college education, but they did not „want to be' either Friedan or the women she described.

Many women who graduated from college in the late 1950s entered the workplace immediately after graduation with the intention of pursuing a career rather than just doing a job, as Friedan herself would recommend, but they also intentioned to put their careers on hold while their children were young. These students were aware that if they prepared well enough in college and in the workplace after graduation, they could successfully do both. Friedan claimed in *The Feminine Mystique* that the college graduates of the 1950s did not have a choice about their future as society had put them on a path which would lead them back to the home, but she was incorrect; these women did have a choice, they just did not choose the option Friedan wanted them to.

Conclusion

With the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, thousands of women both in America and abroad found an articulation of the suffering they had been struggling with for so long. It was not the first book to discuss the problems endured by housewives, nor was it entirely truthful about the severity of their situation, but it succeeded where others had failed, both giving a voice to those who were oppressed and providing them with a leader to guide their revolution. Had *The Feminine Mystique* not been published, it is likely that the women's movement would still have occurred, but perhaps not as quickly as it did, which would have left those who were oppressed to suffer for much longer. One only has to read a few pages of another of Betty Friedan's books, *It Changed My Life*, to realise the immense impact her work had on the day to day lives of so many women in mid-century America. Betty Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique* played an important role in the emancipation so many women experienced in the following decades from the world of kitchen, babies, sex, bedroom and home, and protected so many more from ever entering it.

That the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* accelerated the onset of the women's movement is in little doubt. Historian William Chafe has argued that "the fact that the problem was discovered represented a development of critical importance".²⁶⁸ Despite the fact that "talk about female discontent had been rife for years" Chafe claimed that Betty Friedan was able to give those affected a "focus for their anger" by identifying „culprits' and „perpetuators' of the problem.²⁶⁹ He stated that "her book helped to crystallize a sense of grievance and to provide an ideological position with which the discontented could identify. *The Feminine Mystique* sold more than a million copies and, if not all readers agreed with the conclusions, they could not help but re-examine their own lives in light of the questions it raised".²⁷⁰ Chafe identified that Betty

Friedan and the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* exerted a “significant influence” on the development of the women’s movement after 1963.

That the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* and the subsequent women’s movement has had a positive and lasting effect on the college campus is not under scrutiny. Many of the women who wrote to Friedan to thank her for her work informed her that, since reading her words, they had chosen to return to college to either complete the degree that they had abandoned years earlier or pursue the graduate work that they had never had the courage to before.²⁷¹ Alice Davis, the director of the Smith College Vocational Office in the 1950s, claimed in 1964 that she had recently seen a marked increase in enquiries from alumni and older graduates from other institutions who were interested in the availability of courses for mature students. Davis attributed this boost to the recent publications of the report from the President’s Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), and *The Feminine Mystique*.²⁷²

As William Chafe identified however in *The American Woman; Her Changing Economic, Social and Political Roles, 1920 – 1970* (1972) “the most important pre-condition for the resurgence of the women’s movement... was the amount of change which had already occurred among American females”.²⁷³ Betty Friedan and the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* certainly acted as a catalyst to the movement, but American women, supported by educators, politicians and even the vilified women’s service magazines, had begun to rebel against the proscriptive roles assigned to women by society and their gender many years earlier. As Linda Eisenmann noted that “although scholarly and more popular attention more frequently examines wartime women and 1960s feminists, the activism of 1950s and early 1960s female leaders deserves recognition on its own terms. As Daniel Horowitz recognised in *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique; The American Left, the Cold War and Modern*

Feminism (1998) Friedan herself was not „just a housewife’ when she wrote *The Feminine Mystique*; through her work with the labour unions she had learned how to stage a protest, and it was her role as a freelance journalist, not her experiences as an oppressed housewife, which gave her the inspiration to pen *The Feminine Mystique*.²⁷⁴ There is no reason to assume that she was an isolated success among women at this time.

Neither housewives nor college students were as monotone as Friedan suggested in *The Feminine Mystique*; Eisenmann recognised that “although rebellious college students seem more a feature of the 1960s, the post-war era featured a small but growing group of non-conformists”.²⁷⁵ That they were aware of, and were fighting against, the „problem with no name’ before 1963 must be recognised as a part of women’s history as it was of vital importance to the success of the book (and the subsequent movement it inspired). As Chafe identified, revolutions rarely succeed among those “enslaved in a closed system, such as a concentration camp” as those who are oppressed have so little hope that it is impossible for them to even conceive of a different life. For a revolution to occur, those involved must have already begun to relieve themselves of their oppression and through this become aware of the deprivation which they have been suffering under.²⁷⁶ Chafe gave as an example the work of turn of the century author and feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and explained that although “there was little in the writings of Friedan..., that had not been anticipated in one form or another by the writing of Charlotte Perkins Gilman... Gilman never received the enthusiastic reception accorded her latter day successor”. Chafe attributed this difference in the way the two women’s words were received to the fact that “Gilman spoke to an audience which, by virtue of the social structure of the time, was incapable of hearing her message”.²⁷⁷ Chafe identified that “if reality had not already altered considerably – if women had not already departed in such great numbers from

their traditional sphere – it is doubtful that the feminists' call for further change would have met with the response it did".²⁷⁸ The success of Friedan's work indicates that her audience was not as oppressed as popular history has led us to believe. To disregard from history the extent to which both women and men „broke the mould' and worked for both their own freedom and the freedom of other oppressed groups in the 1950s is to undermine the role they played in shaping their own futures and creating the foundation for the movement which exploded in the following decade.

It has not been my intention in this thesis to imply that the „problem with no name', named as the „feminine mystique' by Betty Friedan did not exist in America in the 1950s and early 1960s. It is indisputable that there existed for some women during this period a pressure to conform to an idealised image of a domesticated housewife whose primary concern was her husband and children, not her own interests or psychological wellbeing. That this pressure was a recent phenomenon, or was specific to women living in the middle of the 20th century however is less certain. Friedan suggested that the „feminine mystique' had been created after the Second World War “by writers and editors who are men”, and in doing so discounted the numerous women who had suffered from the same nameless problem for hundreds of years previously, including the „emancipated' interwar years and during the Second World War when Rosie the Riveter was ruled the home front. Chafe claimed that “contemporary feminists often showed an appalling ignorance of history in their contention that the „feminine mystique' represented a post-WWII phenomenon” as in fact “the consistency of anti-feminist arguments constitutes one of the most striking facts of the entire debate in America over woman's place”. He argued that “women had been told for over a hundred years that equality would lead to the destruction of the home and family... feminists had simply given a fresh expression to an old problem”.²⁷⁹ Friedan discusses these eras in *The Feminine Mystique*, in the chapter entitled „The Passionate Journey',

but chose to focus her narrative on those women who fought against the position that had been bestowed upon them by their society. Friedan represented these women – early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, non-conformist Lucy Stone and head of the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) Carrie Chapman Catt - as the rule, rather than the exception, which is what they were.²⁸⁰ From the beginning of the American nation, the 'feminine mystique' existed, albeit under another name. During and shortly after the American Revolution a discussion took place to determine the place women would inhabit in the new republic; Abigail Adams famously requested that her husband "remember the women" when carving out a place for the citizens of the new United States.²⁸¹ Shortly afterwards however, women received their political power in the form of 'republican motherhood', a doctrine which required women to confine themselves to the hearth, and exercise their influence on the new republic by proxy only, through the education of their sons for public office. Philadelphia physician and politician Benjamin Rush summed up the new role for women in a speech which closely mirrored that delivered by Adlai Stevenson to the students of Smith College in 1955. Originally given to the Young Ladies Academy of Philadelphia, Rush declared that "the equal share that every citizen has in the liberty and the possible share he may have in the government of our country make it necessary that our ladies should be qualified to a certain degree, by a peculiar and suitable education, to concur in instructing their sons in the principals of liberty and government".²⁸² Historian Paula Baker claimed that "motherhood was now described as woman's special calling – a 'vocation' in Nancy Cott's term – that, if performed knowledgeably and faithfully, represented the culmination of a woman's life".²⁸³ Women were allowed to educate themselves, but were only able to use their newfound knowledge in the service of their

family within the confines of the domestic sphere, a concept which rings true of the „feminine mystique’.

The „cult of true womanhood’ arose shortly after the establishment of republican motherhood. As described by Barbara Welter in her seminal article *The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820 – 1860* (1966) “woman, in the cult of true womanhood presented by the women’s magazines, gift annuals and religious literature of the 19th century was the hostage in the home”.²⁸⁴ The cult of true womanhood required its followers to conform to four personality traits, without which they were considered to be unfeminine. Women were expected to demonstrate that they were pious - religion was viewed as a particularly feminine attribute at this time - pure, submissive to their husband or father and domestic, as the idea of the home as the female sphere was central to the ideology of the cult.²⁸⁵ Education was not vilified by the perpetrators of the cult; female seminaries at the time advertised their services by stating that “The average woman is to be the presiding genius of love in the home where she is to give a correct and elevated literary taste to her children and to assume that influential station that she ought to possess as the companion of an educated man”.²⁸⁶ The cult indicated however that, akin to both the institution of republican motherhood and the „feminine mystique’, a „true woman’s’ education was never complete “until she was instructed in the gentle art of homemaking”.²⁸⁷ Both the concept of republican motherhood and the cult of true womanhood were also discussed widely by contemporary writers, especially *Godey’s Lady Book*, and influenced only those women from „middling’ and „better’ families as those from the lower classes could neither afford the education nor spare the time to educate their own sons, making them especially similar to the „feminine mystique’.²⁸⁸

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan suggested that during the decades leading up to the 1950s, the pressures of the ‚feminine mystique‘ had not been felt by American women. Friedan demonstrated the differences between the two eras by discussing the stories published in the magazines in each period and highlighting the differences between the respective messages. However Friedan did not discuss the fact that during the depression, despite economic necessity women had been encouraged not to work, so as to leave more jobs available for male workers. Alice Kessler-Harris argued that “While it imposed on the family pressures that pushed women into wage work, it fostered a public stance that encouraged family unity and urged women, in the interest of jobs for men, to avoid paid work themselves”.²⁸⁹ A debate raged throughout the depression years about whether women should be allowed to work at all and women’s magazines published articles entitled “You Can have My Job: A Feminist Discovers her Home” and “The Return of the Lady”.²⁹⁰ Despite the fact that during the depression years many women entered the workplace out of necessity, the concept of the home as a woman’s sphere was publicly upheld. Friedan also did not consider that women, although encouraged to work during the Second World War to support America’s war effort, had for the most part done so only if they either had no family commitments or were in need of extra money to provide for their children. The increase in the number of women in the workplace during the war occurred mostly among older married women, whereas those with family commitments demonstrated “practically no net expansion”. Once again the women’s magazines published during this period, which Friedan had spoken so highly of in *The Feminine Mystique*, published adverts which encouraged readers to view their role as wife and mother as of national importance. An advert featured proclaimed “Lookie! My Hands to War Work on the Family Clothes Line”; another indicated a picture of an apron and declared “Wear Your Uniform Proudly, Miss America”.²⁹¹ Women who did go out to

work in this period were constantly reminded that their career outside the home was „for the duration’ only.²⁹² Women did go to work during the depression and the Second World War, but this did not destroy the power that the „feminine mystique’ still exerted over society during these eras.

The pressures many women felt during the 1950s and early 1960s to conform to a domestic norm and to be contented with it had been experienced by women for generations before them. It is indisputable that many women in the 1950s did suffer from this affliction, and that they benefitted greatly from both the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* and the subsequent women’s movement it helped to inspire, but neither were they unique in their suffering, nor was Friedan unique in her efforts to free them. That the „feminine mystique’ as described by Betty Friedan existed cannot be contended, but that it was worse for those who lived in the middle of the 20th century, and that no hope existed for them throughout this decade is undecided. The world women inhabited in the 1950s and early 1960s both on the college campus and in the workplace was not as black and white as it has been represented, but what is certain is that more research into this diverse and interesting decade is now required.

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- ¹³ Susan Oliver- *Betty Friedan: The Personal is Political* (2008), New York, Boston, San Francisco: Pearson Longman, 117.
- ¹⁴ *For further discussion of The Feminine Mystique as the root of the women’s movement in the 1960s see the Conclusion.*
- ¹⁵ *For more information on the positive responses to the publication of The Feminine Mystique see Betty Friedan – It Changed My Life (1998) Cambridge: Harvard University Press and Elaine Tyler May – Homeward Bound; American Families in the Cold War Era (1999) New York: Basic Books.*
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- ²⁵ *Eva Moskowitz’s article discussed the ways in which women’s service magazines represented the housewives’ psychological state in the 1950s, and how this differed from Friedan’s representation of the topic in The Feminine Mystique. Moskowitz also claimed that Friedan was not the first person to discuss the suffering experienced by housewives in this era.*
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- ³³ *ibid.*
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- ³⁵ Friedan, 80 – 102.
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- ⁴⁵ Peril, 206; Friedan, 1, 185, 353 – 354.
- ⁴⁶ Peril, 207.
- ⁴⁷ For more in-depth discussion of magazines which were aimed at younger readers in the 1950s, see Chapter 1 of this thesis.
- ⁴⁸ Peril, 207.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ Friedan, 36.
- ⁵² The film starred Kirsten Dunst, Julia Styles, Maggie Gyllenhaal and Ginnifer Goodwin.
- ⁵³ *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003) dir. Mike Newell, Columbia Pictures.
- ⁵⁴ *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003) dir. Mike Newell, Columbia Pictures.
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- ⁵⁶ *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003) dir. Mike Newell, Columbia Pictures.
- ⁵⁷ *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003) dir. Mike Newell, Columbia Pictures.
- ⁵⁸ *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003) dir. Mike Newell, Columbia Pictures.
- ⁵⁹ Friedan, 70.
- ⁶⁰ *What Women Wanted: 1953* (2004) Columbia Pictures.
- ⁶¹ N.W. Eyer and Son - *Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals, 1959* (1959) Philadelphia: N.W. Eyer & Son.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ Friedan, 15.
- ⁶⁴ Eisenmann, 79.
- ⁶⁵ Friedan, 18.
- ⁶⁶ Friedan, 70.
- ⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 46.
- ⁶⁸ Friedan, 46.
- ⁶⁹ Horowitz, 210.
- ⁷⁰ Smith College Questionnaires, '42, Schlesinger Library, Friedan Collection, Box 31 #418a, 418b, 419a, 419b.
- ⁷¹ Meyerowitz, 231.
- ⁷² Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson (ed) – *Women and Work Culture: Britain c.1850 – 1950* (2005), London; Ashgate, 141.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Each major women's magazine's circulation at the end of the 1950s was as follows: *Ladies' Home Journal* - 5,695,399; *Good Housekeeping* - 4,367,765; *McCall's* - 5,340,140; *Redbook* - 2,689,510. For more information on circulation figures see N.W. Eyer and Son - *Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals, 1959* (1959) Philadelphia: N.W. Eyer & Son.

⁷⁵ Meyerowitz, 231.

⁷⁶ Friedan, 36.

⁷⁷ Friedan, 36.

⁷⁸ Friedan, 51.

⁷⁹ Smith College Questionnaires, '42, Schlesinger Library, Friedan Collection, Box 31 #418a, 418b, 419a, 419b.

⁸⁰ Friedan, 37.

⁸¹ Meyerowitz, 240.

⁸² „The Last Chance to Win WWII' Lord Halifax, *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1957, 22; „FDR Wanted George VI to Give Hong Kong to China', Lord Halifax, *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1957, 31.

⁸³ Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt Glossary, Dorothy Thompson (1893-1961).
<http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/thompson-dorothy.cfm>

⁸⁴ „Red Roses' Lucille Vaughn Payne, *Seventeen*, September 1956, 139.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Nevitt Sandford - „Is College Education a Waste of Time for Women?', *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1957, 79.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Nevitt Sandford - „Is College Education a Waste of Time for Women?', *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1957, 79.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 36.

⁹⁰ *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1957, 97.

⁹¹ Nevitt Sandford - „Is College Education a Waste of Time for Women?', *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1957, 198.

⁹² *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1957, 57.

⁹³ Douglas, 43 - 44.

⁹⁴ *Mademoiselle*, July 1956, 93.

⁹⁵ Meyerowitz, 234.

⁹⁶ Nevitt Sandford - „Is College Education a Waste of Time for Women?', *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1957, 198.

⁹⁷ Margaret Hickey - „Public Affairs Dept', *Ladies' Home Journal*, August 1956, 21.

⁹⁸ For more information on the day-care debate in the USA see Emilie Stoltzfus - *Citizen, Mother, Worker: Debating Public Responsibility for Child Care after the Second World War* (2003) Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press; Valerie Polakow - *Lives on the Edge: Single Mothers and Their Children in the Other America* (1994) Chicago: Chicago University Press; Marian O'Brien Steinfelds - *Who's Minding the Children: The History and Politics of Day-care in America* (1974) New York: Simon and Schuster; Elizabeth Rose - *A Mother's Job: The History of Day-care, 1890 - 1960* (1999) New York: Oxford University Press.

⁹⁹ Friedan, 44.

¹⁰⁰ Jean Todd Freeman - „The French Doll', *The Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1956, 67.

¹⁰¹ Clifford R. Adams - „Making Marriage Work', *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1956, 57.

¹⁰² William Graebner - *Coming of Age in Buffalo* (1990) Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 13.

¹⁰³ Friedan, 38.

¹⁰⁴ Friedan, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Weiss, 207.

¹⁰⁶ Betty Goldstein Friedan - „If One Generation Can Ever Tell Another: A Woman is a Person Too' *Smith College Alumnae Quarterly*, Winter 1961, Northampton, MA. Smith College Archives.

¹⁰⁷ Rabbi Julius J Nodel- „Is The Feminine Mystique a Feminine Mistake?' *Temple Shaare Emeth* 15/11/63, St Louis Mo. Box 43 Number 52, Friedan Collection.

¹⁰⁸ Eva Moskowitz - „It's Good to Blow Your Top: Women's Magazines and a Discourse of Discontent, 1945 - 1965' *The Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Fall 1996, Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁸⁸.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 89.

¹¹¹ *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1957.

¹¹² Shirley Jackson - „On Being a Faculty Wife', *Mademoiselle*, December 1956, 116.

¹¹³ Ibid, 136.

¹¹⁴ Horowitz, 196.

- ¹¹⁵ Nevitt Sandford - „Is College Education a Waste of Time for Women?’ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, May 1957, 198.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁷ Friedan, 344.
- ¹¹⁸ Nevitt Sandford - „Is College Education a Waste of Time for Women?’ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, May 1957, 198.
- ¹¹⁹ Walker, 11.
- ¹²⁰ Walker, vii; *ibid* 11.
- ¹²¹ Friedan, 45.
- ¹²² Friedan, 46.
- ¹²³ Joan Alleman Rubin – “Underwater Enterprise”, *Mademoiselle*, June 1957, 138.
- ¹²⁴ Milton Glaser – „How Long Will you Work?’, *Seventeen*, February 1957, 38.
- ¹²⁵ *Seventeen*, August 1956, 108.
- ¹²⁶ *Smith College Freshman Handbook* 1954-55, Northampton MA. Box 2212, College Archives, Neilson Library, Smith College, Northampton MA. Hereafter referred to as Smith College Archive.
- ¹²⁷ Eisenmann, 45.
- ¹²⁸ Friedan 16; Eisenmann 45.
- ¹²⁹ Seven Sisters Colleges included Barnard College, Bryn Mawr College, Mount Holyoke College, Radcliffe College, Smith College, Vassar College and Wellesley College; „Thousands of College Applicants Awaiting Decision on Admission’, *New York Times* 21/04/57. Box 5, Folder 1, Smith College Archives.
- ¹³⁰ Friedan, 160; *ibid* 162.
- ¹³¹ *Smith College Course Catalogue*, 1955-56, Northampton MA, 35. Smith College Archives.
- ¹³² Ibid.
- ¹³³ *Smith College Freshman Handbook*, 1954-55, Northampton MA, 104. Box 2212, Smith College Archives.
- ¹³⁴ *Smith College Course Catalogue*, 1955-56, Northampton MA, 71,121,123-124. Smith College Archives.
- ¹³⁵ *Smith College Course Catalogue*, 1946-47, Northampton MA, 143. *Smith College Course Catalogue*, 1957-58, 133. „New Courses for ’58-’59 Announced’, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 53, 15/04/58, Northampton MA, 1. Smith College Archives.
- ¹³⁶ „New Courses Offer Flexible Program’, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 34, 26/11/57, Northampton MA, 1. „New Courses for ’58-’59 Announced’, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 53, 15/04/58, Northampton MA, 1. Smith College Archives.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid
- ¹³⁸ „Three in One Blow’, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 36, 10/12/57, Northampton MA, 2. Smith College Archives.
- ¹³⁹ Friedan, 153.
- ¹⁴⁰ *ibid*.
- ¹⁴¹ Box 39, Folder 517c. Friedan Collection.
- ¹⁴² „Lilly Symbolizes Esteem for Women’ *The Sophian*, Vol. VI, 39, 6/2/58, Northampton MA, 4, Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁴³ *For the full collection of the interviews Friedan conducted at Smith College see Box 39, 517C, Friedan Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. For more information see other interviews Friedan conducted with college students, including Box 39, 517A, Friedan Collection, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.*
- ¹⁴⁴ Lucy Lippard – „How Do We Look at America Now?’ *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 24, 10/17/57 Northampton MA, 2, Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁴⁵ Friedan, 152.
- ¹⁴⁶ „Top Jobs for the Juniors’, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No. 27a, 31/10/57, Northampton MA, 2. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁴⁷ Box 39, Number 517c. Friedan Collection.
- ¹⁴⁸ „Weekends’, Smith College Year Book *The Hamper*, 1958, Northampton MA, 98. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Smith College Course Catalogue*, 1942-43, Northampton MA. *Smith College Course Catalogue*, 1958-59, Northampton MA. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁵⁰ Office of the President: Benjamin F. Wright Papers, Box 1 Folder 10 „Report From Ad Hoc Committee on Sciences 1958-59’, Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁵¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁵² Friedan, 152
- ¹⁵³ Friedan, 152
- ¹⁵⁴ Friedan, 153.

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- ¹⁵⁵ Ed Stein- ‚Education‘, *Time*, 18/11/57, New York NY, 51.
- ¹⁵⁶ Eisenmann, 62.
- ¹⁵⁷ Eisenmann, 62.
- ¹⁵⁸ ‚The Future of Women’s Education‘, *The Barnard Alumnae Magazine*, February 1953, New York NY, 1-4. *The contributors to this article were Lynn White Jnr. of Mills College, William E. Stevenson of Oberlin College, C. W. De Kiewiet of the University of Rochester and Sarah Gibson Blanding of Vassar College.*
- ¹⁵⁹ ‚A Teapot’s Tempest‘, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 54, 17/04/58, Northampton MA, 2. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁶⁰ Friedan, 153.
- ¹⁶¹ ‚An Educated Voice‘ – AYV, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 38, 17/12/57, Northampton MA, 2. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁶² Ibid.
- ¹⁶³ Sally Cadbury- ‚Nuclear Tests or Disarmament‘, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 55, 22/04/58, Northampton MA, 2. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁶⁴ ‚Fisher to Confer on WUS Program‘, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 59, 06/05/58, Northampton MA, 4. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁶⁵ ‚Smith Senior Visits Russia to Attend Astronomy Council‘ *The Sophian*, Vol. VI, 9/6/58, Northampton MA, 2, Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁶⁶ Friedan, 156.
- ¹⁶⁷ A selection of articles addressing segregation that appeared in *The Sophian* in the academic year 1957-58 are listed as follows; ‚Ike Uses Troops for Integration‘, Vol. VI No 18, 26/09/57, 1; ‚Speaker Discusses Racial Problem‘ and ‚Theta Xi’s Suspend Amherst Chapter‘, Vol. VI No 20, 03/10/57, 1-3; Susan Houston - ‚A Large Audience Hears Mr Wright Discuss Arkansas‘ Vol. VI No 21, 08/10/57, 1; ‚123 Protest Apartheid‘, Vol. VI No 24, 17/10/57, 5. ‚Hill Lectures on Purpose of NAACP‘, Vol. VI No 26, 24/10/57, 1/6; ‚Minister/Politician from Harlem will Deliver Lecture on Monday‘, Vol. VI No 27a, 31/10/57, 1; ‚Powell Discusses Little Rock Issue: US Must Show the World True Practice of Democracy‘, Vol. VI No 28, 05/11/57, 1/4. ;Rita Sepowitz - ‚Miss Carter Panel Consider South African Segregation‘, Vol. VI No 37, 12/11/57, 1/6. ;‚An Educated Voice‘, Vol. VI No 38, 17/11/57, 2; ‚South African Schools Restricted to Whites; Parliament will Close Medical School to Natives‘, Vol. VI No 59, 06/5/58, 1; ‚Africa Needs Student Aid‘, ‚Miss Chase Opposes Apartheid Plan‘ and ‚NSA Affirms Basic Rights at the Core of African Issue‘, Vol. VI No 60, 08/05/58, 1-2.
- ¹⁶⁸ AYV - ‚An Educated Voice‘, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 38, 17/11/57, Northampton MA, 2. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁶⁹ ‚Minister/ Politician from Harlem will Deliver Lecture on Monday‘ *The Sophian*, Vol. VI, 27a, 31/10/57, Northampton MA, 1, Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁷⁰ Massimo Salvatori - ‚Africa Needs Student Aid‘ *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No. 59, 6/5/58, Northampton MA, 1. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁷¹ Sally Cadbury - ‚Nuclear Tests or Disarmament‘ *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 55, 22/04/58, Northampton MA, 2. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁷² ‚Scott favours New Group for Sane Nuclear Plans‘ *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 55, 22/04/58, Northampton MA, 2. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁷³ *For a more in-depth discussion of the way in which women’s activism in the 1950s influenced the women’s movement in the 1960s, see the conclusion of this thesis.*
- ¹⁷⁴ Eisenmann, 18.
- ¹⁷⁵ Benjamin F. Wright- ‚Liberal Aims and Scientific Training‘, *Smith College Alumnae Quarterly*, Fall 1956, Northampton MA, 4-5. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁷⁶ Eisenmann, 18.
- ¹⁷⁷ Eisenmann, 51.
- ¹⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁹ Alice Norman Davis - ‚Employing the Woman Scientist‘, *Smith College Alumnae Quarterly*, Fall 1956, Northampton MA, 12-13. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁸⁰ Benjamin F. Wright- Letter included in ‚Report from Ad Hoc Committee on Sciences 1958-59‘, Box 1 Folder 10. Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁸¹ *Smith College Year Book The Hamper*, 1958, Northampton MA, 98. Smith College Archives
- ¹⁸² Office of the President: Benjamin F. Wright Papers Box 14 Folder 3, ‚Report from Barnard College Seven Colleges Conference‘ 24-25/10/58, Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁸³ *Smith College Course Catalogue* (1955) Northampton, MA, 45.

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- ¹⁸⁴ *Smith College Course Catalogue* (1942) Northampton MA, 326; *Smith College Course Catalogue* (1958) Northampton MA, 196.
- ¹⁸⁵ Unknown - „Thomas C. Mendenhall Deplores Neglect of Female Brains’, New York Times, 01/03/60, New York NY, Box 32 Folder 429, Friedan Collection.
- ¹⁸⁶ Office of the President: Benjamin F. Wright Papers, Box 1 Folder 10 „Report From Ad Hoc Committee on Sciences 1958-59’, Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁹¹ Eisenmann, 19; Chafe, 218.
- ¹⁹² Eisenmann, 21.
- ¹⁹³ Chafe, 218.
- ¹⁹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁵ Office of the President: Thomas C. Mendenhall Papers, Series 5, Box 18, „Vocational Office Annual Reports, 1960 -1964’, Report from 1960 – 61, Smith College Archives.
- ¹⁹⁶ Friedan, 150.
- ¹⁹⁷ Ibid 150; 158.
- ¹⁹⁸ Friedan, 156-57.
- ¹⁹⁹ Friedan, 160; 171.
- ²⁰⁰ Friedan, 158.
- ²⁰¹ Friedan, 150.
- ²⁰² Friedan, 151.
- ²⁰³ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁴ Eisenmann, 106. *Bunting led the Commission on the Education of Women from 1959 and strongly advocated training for college dropouts. She created a scheme at Douglass College which re-trained housewives in mathematics in preparation for teaching and also created the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) which allowed both men and women to accrue college credits outside of the regular collegiate curriculum.*
- ²⁰⁵ Friedan, 157.
- ²⁰⁶ *Smith College Freshman Handbook*, 1954-55, Northampton MA. Box 2212, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁰⁷ AAUW 1951-1959, 06/03/59, Box 1 Folder 2. Smith College Archives.
- ²⁰⁸ *Smith College Bulletin: The Catalogue Number*, 1956 – 57, Northampton MA, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁰⁹ „Seniors Are Advised: Plan Ahead and Avoid Panic’ *The Sophian* Vol. VI No. 24, 17/10/57, 6. Smith College Archives.
- ²¹⁰ Sarah Fiddler - „Seniors Consider Job Possibilities’ *The Sophian* Vol. VI No. 27a, 31/10/57, 5. Smith College Archives.
- ²¹¹ Alice Norma Davis - „Placement Institute Publishes Director: Lists Summer Openings’ *The Sophian* Vol. VI 41, 13/02/58, 2. Smith College Archives.
- ²¹² Ibid.
- ²¹³ Ibid.
- ²¹⁴ Office of the President: Thomas C. Mendenhall Papers, Series 5, Box 18, „Vocational Office Annual Reports, 1960 -1964’, Report from 1960 – 61, Smith College Archives.
- ²¹⁵ Ibid.
- ²¹⁶ Eisenmann, 17.
- ²¹⁷ Eisenmann, 16.
- ²¹⁸ Alice Norman Davis- „Employing the Woman Scientist’, *Smith College Alumnae Quarterly*, Fall 1956, Northampton MA, 12-13. Smith College Archives.
- ²¹⁹ „Government Opens Exams to Juniors’ *The Sophian* Vol. VI No. 21, 08/10/57, 4. Smith College Archives.
- ²²⁰ Ibid.
- ²²¹ Clifford Bragden – „Teacher Shortage Tops Missile Needs’ *The Sophian* Vol. VI No. 32, 21/11/57, 3. Smith College Archives.
- ²²² „Students Discuss Teaching Masters’ *The Sophian* Vol. VI No. 38, 17/12/57, 5-6, Smith College Archives.
- ²²³ US AIRFORCE advertisement, *The Sophian*, Vol. VI No 59, 06/05/58, Northampton MA, 3. Smith College Archives.

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- ²²⁴ Alice Norman Davis- „Employing the Woman Scientist’, Smith College *Alumnae Quarterly*, Fall 1956, Northampton MA, 12-13. Smith College Archives.
- ²²⁵ Ibid.
- ²²⁶ Friedan, 60.
- ²²⁷ *For a more in-depth discussion of the convention of republican motherhood, please refer to the conclusion of this thesis.*
- ²²⁸ Adlai Stevenson „A Purpose for Modern Woman’ excerpted from a Commencement Address, Smith College, 1955, in *Women's Home Companion*, 09/55. <http://www.h-net.org/~hst203/documents/stevenson.html> Accessed 10/10/10.
- ²²⁹ Ibid.
- ²³⁰ Ibid.
- ²³¹ Ibid.
- ²³² Ibid.
- ²³³ Ibid.
- ²³⁴ Friedan, 60.
- ²³⁵ Ibid, 61.
- ²³⁶ Class of 1952, Box 2212, „Commencement Speakers’, Smith College Archives.
- ²³⁷ Class of 1958, Box 2212 „Who’s who?’, Smith College Archives.
- ²³⁸ Class of 1952, Box 2212, „Commencement Speakers’, Smith College Archives.
- ²³⁹ Office of the President: Thomas C. Mendenhall Papers, Series 5, Box 18, „Vocational Office Annual Reports, 1960 -1964’, Report from 1963 – 64, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁴⁰ Chafe, 218.
- ²⁴¹ Friedan, 71.
- ²⁴² Chafe, 219. In 1962 36.2% of non-college educated women were in the workplace.
- ²⁴³ „Mademoiselle Interviews’, Box 39 Folder 517a, Friedan Collection.
- ²⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁴⁶ Ibid
- ²⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁴⁸ Class of 1958, Box 2212 „Who’s who?’, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁴⁹ Unknown - „Job Opportunities Increase for Graduates of Barnard’ *Barnard Bulletin*, 14/02/57, 3.
- ²⁵⁰ Class of 1958, Box 2212 „Who’s who?’, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁵¹ *The Barnard Bulletin*, 02/11/57, New York, NY, 3; *The Barnard Bulletin*, 14/11/57, New York, NY, 4; <http://barnardcollege.newspaperarchive.com/PdfViewer.aspx?img=35615482&src=browse> Accessed 10/10/10.
- ²⁵² Chafe, 219
- ²⁵³ Friedan, 70.
- ²⁵⁴ Friedan, 17.
- ²⁵⁵ Chafe, 237.
- ²⁵⁶ Elaine Tyler May – *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War* (1999) New York: Basic Books, 188.
- ²⁵⁷ „Mademoiselle Interviews’, Box 39 Folder 517a, Friedan Collection.
- ²⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁵⁹ Chafe, 324 - 5.
- ²⁶⁰ Chafe, 218.
- ²⁶¹ Office of the President: Benjamin F. Wright Papers, Box 14 „Meeting Minutes of Seven College Conference, 28-29/10/55, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁶² „College Women and the Nations Labour Needs’, Smith College *Alumnae Quarterly*, Fall 1962, Northampton MA, 8. Smith College Archives.
- ²⁶³ Office of the President: Benjamin F. Wright Papers, Box 5 „Report from the Committee on Graduate Study to the Trustee Members of the Committee, 14/02/57, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁶⁴ Office of the President: Thomas C. Mendenhall Papers, Series 5, Box 18, „Vocational Office Annual Reports, 1960 -1964’, Report from 1962 – 63, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁶⁵ Office of the President: Benjamin F. Wright Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, 08/05/1959, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁶⁶ Box 39, Folder 517c. Friedan Collection.
- ²⁶⁷ Betty Friedan- „If One Generation Can Ever Tell Another: A Woman is a Person Too’, *Smith College Alumnae Quarterly*, Winter 1961, Northampton MA, 68. Smith College Archives.

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- ²⁶⁸ Chafe, 232.
- ²⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁷⁰ Ibid. *For further discussion of the book's impact on the women's movement, see Meyerowitz and Eisenmann.*
- ²⁷¹ May, 193.
- ²⁷² Office of the President: Thomas C. Mendenhall Papers, Series 5, Box 18, „Vocational Office Annual Reports, 1960 -1964', Report from 1963 – 64, Smith College Archives.
- ²⁷³ Chafe, 234.
- ²⁷⁴ Horowitz, 86.
- ²⁷⁵ Eisenmann, 63.
- ²⁷⁶ Chafe, 234.
- ²⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁷⁹ Chafe, 231.
- ²⁸⁰ Friedan, 80 – 102.
- ²⁸¹ Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander, ed. – *Major Problems in American History* (2003) Boston; Houghton & Mifflin Co., 70.
- ²⁸² Linda K. Kerber – „The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen; Contradictions and Choices in Revolutionary America', Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, ed. - *Women's America; Refocusing the Past* (2004) New York and Oxford; Oxford University Press, 124.
- ²⁸³ Norton, Alexander - 113.
- ²⁸⁴ Barbara Welter – “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820 – 1890”, *American Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No.2, Part 1 (Summer 1966), 151.
- ²⁸⁵ Ibid, 152.
- ²⁸⁶ Ibid, 168.
- ²⁸⁷ Ibid, 166.
- ²⁸⁸ Welter, 166.
- ²⁸⁹ Alice Kessler-Harris – *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (1982) New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 251.
- ²⁹⁰ Ibid, 253.
- ²⁹¹ HINDS FOR HANDS advertisement, *Ladies' Home Journal* 05/43, 100; STOKELY'S FINEST FOODS advertisement, *Ladies' Home Journal*, 05/43, 121.
- ²⁹² Harris, 278.